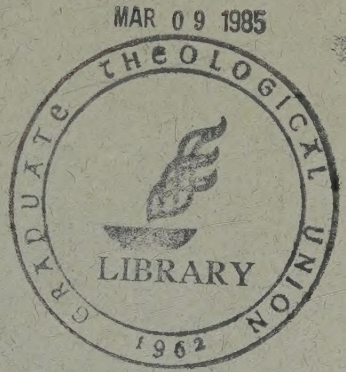
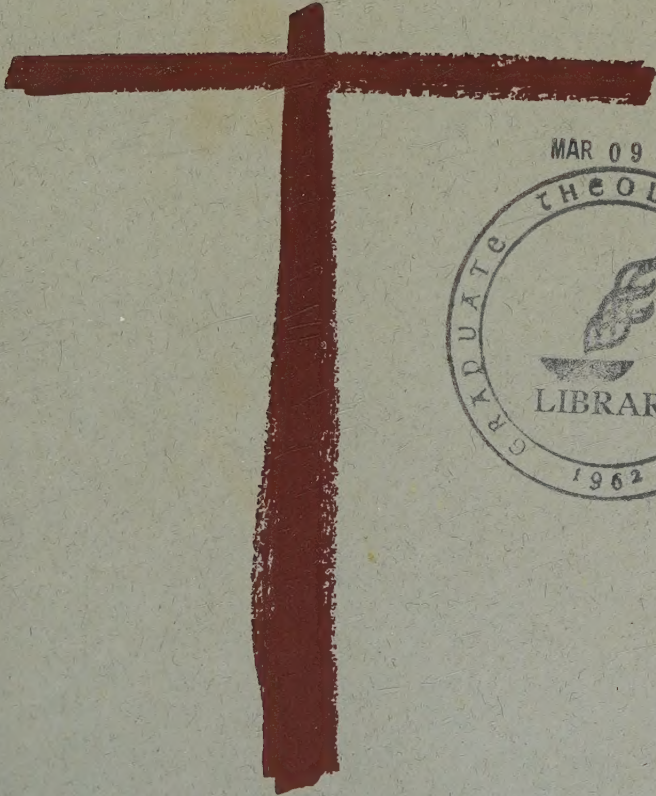


How to Help

The Franciscan



**VOLUME XXVII
NUMBER 1**

JANUARY, 1985

1.00

The Society of Saint Francis

Protector of the Society: The Bishop of New York

Minister General: Brother Geoffrey S.S.F.

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Note: *Sisters †Brothers ‡Administration

(continued on page 3 of cc)



Pax et bonum

THE FRANCISCAN

Vol. XXVII

No. 1

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CONTENTS

HOW TO HELP... ..	1
THE MINISTER GENERAL'S LETTER	2
CHRONICLE	4
BROTHER STEPHEN	21
HOW TO HELP:	
WORKING WITH CYRENIANS <i>John Turnbull</i>	22
PAUL'S DANCE <i>Anthony Gibbings</i>	26
ON YOUR DOORSTEP <i>Tess Nind</i>	31
TO HELP THE WORLD? <i>Pamela H. Gruber</i>	34
HELPING POLITICALLY <i>Frank Field M.P.</i>	39
BOOKS	43
POEMS	45

1985-86

INCREASE IN PRICE

From this issue, the annual subscription is £3.00 (post-free). Single copies are £1.00 + postage. Will those who pay by **STANDING ORDER** please make the necessary amendment.

THANK YOU

Thanks to all our subscribers who have put a donation with their subscription — this is a real help to us in keeping **THE FRANCISCAN** going at its present standard. Most people have now sent their subscriptions to **SCUNTHORPE** and Brother Christopher thanks everyone for their co-operation in this.

THE PILGRIMS OF ST FRANCIS

invite you to join their: International Chapter, 25th-27th May, 1985, at Westgate-on-Sea, International Pilgrimage, 24th July-1st August, at Valfleuri, near Lyon, France. National Pilgrimage, 24th-31st August, from Dorchester to Sherborne, Dorset. (It is hoped to include a visit to Hilfield Friary.) There will be also a Midland weekend Pilgrimage in Coventry, 26th-28th April, 1985. Details (SAE please) from Mrs. Pam Foster, 49 Haughton Road, Shifnal, Shropshire TF11 8DF. Telephone: Telford (0952) 460694.

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COMPANIONS' LENTEN RETREAT

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EASTER CARDS

From St. Mary's Convent, Freeland. £1.50 per set.

(Above) Mtoni Shamba: Tito up a Guava tree.

(Below) The Life Profession of Samson Amoni at Honiara (Philip, Samson, Archbishop Norman Palmer).



How to Help



CHRISTUS IN PAUPERIBUS (Christ in the poor) was the motto of the monks and nuns of old in their ministry to the needy. It is still the mainspring of much Christian caring today. The example of Saint Francis is especially important. When he kissed the leper, he vividly demonstrated how help is nothing if it does not include treating the other person as a person of equal worth to oneself. His love of Lady Poverty was a whimsical fantasy, whereby he expressed with the lightest possible touch his utterly serious identification with the poor.

Caring for persons is not a one-sided thing. It sets up a relationship in which help at different levels flows both ways. Dominating and aggressive helpers often do not know their own need. Two descriptions of community caring in the pages that follow stress the need to know how to receive as well as to give.

In the past two hundred years enormous strides have been made in transferring the responsibility for caring for the needy to society as a whole. Strangely, the need for voluntary help does not seem to get any less. The ancient lawgiver said 'the poor will never cease out of the land' (Deuteronomy 15.11). If one sort of need is met, others always seem to open up. The better off have their needs too, and can very easily engross more than their share of caring effort. So there has to be a 'bias to the poor', as the Bishop of Liverpool has reminded us.

Especially when we look at the problems of hunger and misery in the world at large, we are liable to throw up our hands in despair at the magnitude of the task. And that means that we feel that there is nothing we can do. We are paralysed by helplessness. Pray, learn, act, give, says our Christian Aid contributor. Whether on the world scale, or on our own doorstep, there is always something that we can do. But we have to learn how to help, and we learn best by doing.

Above all, let it be done always with a light touch, and not out of a guilty conscience. Helping and being helped is a gracious exchange between persons who bear the image of God.

The Minister General's Letter

My dear friends,

Last September Brother Jason and I made a visit to the Order of Friars Minor as guest of John Vaughn, the Minister General. We started in the Curia at Rome, and then were driven to La Verna for the Feast of the Stigmata and so on to Assisi to stay at S. Maria degli Angeli. I was very conscious of being at the very beginnings of the Franciscan life where Francis started and where he died and where he was marked with the wounds of Jesus. But it was not a remembering of a long dead S. Francis, but rather for me a being enveloped by the spirit of Francis which is as alive today as it was then.

During this visit it came to me more clearly than ever that the Franciscan life is really about love — an almighty, holy, fervent love which is of course part of that love of God demonstrated so dramatically, when the Son of God was born at Bethlehem, and when later he died on the Cross at Calvary. The spirituality of Francis centres round these two divine acts of God in Jesus Christ. Francis himself enfleshed this love in practical ways in his life. A new love flooded his prayer, his worship and his human relationships, warm and full of joy, which was expressed in his greeting, 'Pax et Bonum'.

Jason and I experienced something of this divine love in the genuine way we were welcomed at each place, in many touching little kindnesses, and the endless care they showed us. We felt totally accepted as Franciscan brothers. I was personally very moved and greatly honoured to be invited to vest and attend the Minister General in the procession to the place of the Stigmata and to share with him and the Minister Provincial in carrying the Relic of S. Francis.

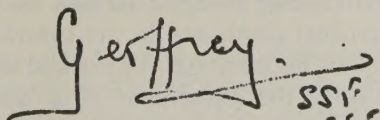
It was a privilege to attend the profession of ten brothers from Croatia who were to return to their native land and also to talk with novices at San Damiano and simple-professed students at the Portiuncula. In all we found a radiant joy. But it was a joy shot through with suffering, for we were shown round La Verna by a Cuban brother who had spent ten years in one of Fidel Castro's gaols. He never mentioned this himself but the Minister General told me about it afterwards. He also spoke of the sufferings and deprivations of his brothers in Czechoslovakia and Rumania where the brothers had lost their schools, were not allowed to accept new vocations and were subject to many indignities. Yet they were continuing faithfully to proclaim and to show forth God's almighty love.

This is the love and joy of Jesus that has overcome the world. Satan is dark, serious and full of hate, and there is plenty of evidence of his work at large in the world today in almost every country. I am writing this in South Africa where one feels a growing hatred and darkness and fear, but by no means only in South Africa. It is there in the terrible recent events in Britain and other countries besides. But our faith is that Christ has overcome the world, and he did it through a mighty surge of love which neither death, nor hatred, nor darkness could quench.

At Assisi I prayed for the brothers and sisters of our three Orders in the Society of S. Francis, and for our devoted Companions and friends. I prayed that we may all catch a new vision as I did at Assisi, and be enflamed with a new love. This vision and this love must start where we are, as we really open ourselves and are genuinely welcoming to all who visit our various houses. 'Pace e Bene', the words the Italian friars use to greet each other, must be real and heartfelt. And this love must not only be for those who visit us, but even more for each other within our Franciscan family. This will mean putting others before ourselves in our family life, a readiness to subject our own wills and desires to others, a willingness to serve our brothers and sisters in community rather than individually following our own bent. It means a flowering of that humility and unselfishness which is so attractive and which draws people to Christ rather than to ourselves. This is the love that will save the world and which the world is longing to experience.

We were in Assisi on September 18, the day when in New York the United Nations assembled at 3.0 p.m. and kept its customary minute of silence to inaugurate its new session. This day was the third annual International Day of Peace, and people throughout the world were being invited to keep that minute of silence to pray for peace, followed by a moment of sound. In Assisi it was 9.0 p.m., corresponding to 3.0 p.m. in New York, and we joined in that minute of prayer and revelled in the moment of sound as the great bells of Assisi rang out expressing in love and joy the yearning of millions of the poor and the powerless for peace. That peace must start in the hearts of each of us as we are purged of anger, hatred and fear and as the Holy Spirit of love, joy and peace floods us. Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe.

Pax et Bonum,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Geoffrey', with a stylized flourish underneath. To the right of the signature are the initials 'SSIF'.

Minister General.

Chronicle

Brother Anselm writes:-

EUROPEAN PROVINCE I am writing while retreat is still fairly fresh in the mind, before it has all faded away again and has been overtaken by 'life'. That's what it feels like, anyway, but, as usual, feelings are not a reliable guide to what is happening or what has happened, and I am left with the conviction that the Holy Spirit can use a 'bad' retreat as much as he can use a 'good' one. I mean bad in the sense that one comes away without the feeling that progress was made, perhaps without any feeling at all — good, in the sense that one is left with the feeling that a step has been taken on the way. Those, like me, for whom things happen slowly, can take heart from the knowledge that it is not one miraculous retreat, but the steady practice of annual retreat over the years, which counts. Retreats are milestones rather than mountain peaks.

I found my last milestone at Glasshampton where many of us make retreat, and where for many years we have also found Brother Alban. His labours as guardian there came to an end early in 1984, and I know that many of our readers will join me in thanking God for what Alban has given to SSF and many others at Glasshampton. He is a man who hates a fuss, so I shall leave it at that — adding, by way of reassurance, that he will shortly return to that house. His work as editor of this journal was continued during his sabbatical in Paddington, and no doubt it will also feature in the next stage of his journey. The house and the brothers (including four novices) are now in the care of Brother Ramon who was elected guardian by the Pentecost Provincial Chapter, and moved there in early July.

While there is a very strong tradition of scholarship amongst Franciscans (Francis himself was never very keen, of course, and the contribution of SSF has been a limited one), it has not been usual for them to be students and disciples of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. However, we have for many years worked in the retreat movement, and last January some of us met at Hilfield under the leadership of Sister Betty Smyth of the Cenacle, Father Christopher Lowe of Mirfield, and Mrs. Penelope Eckersley of our own Third Order, in order to investigate the individually directed retreat. Inevitably we were introduced to this spiritual giant, and to the considerable demands made of those who follow his teaching. We realised that one crowded conference does not qualify the participant as a director of such retreats, so for the

enthusiasts there is to be a study week in Manchester in 1985, and one of the retreats for brothers and sisters is to be of this kind during the year. I believe that as a result some of us will feel drawn to travel further down this road, and that SSF will find itself greatly strengthened spiritually in its own life as well as in the resources which brothers and sisters bring to the conducting of retreats.

In this and in countless other ways, renewal is brought about in the three orders of our society. While in retreat, I read 'My Father took me to the Circus', by Prue Wilson — a book which will doubtless be reviewed in 'The Franciscan', so I mustn't say too much — and was given a glimpse of the renewal process in a Roman Catholic congregation of many thousands of religious sisters, with a history of two hundred years. I suppose it is straining language to talk about the renewal of something which is only about sixty years old — yet, the changes which have taken place in SSF in the last twenty of our sixty years are strikingly similar to those described by Prue Wilson. In superficial matters like the habit, and titles, this is undeniably true — but if such symbolic things move in the same direction, it would not be surprising to find that the things symbolised do too. I believe that they do — that Prue Wilson in fact is talking about religious life, whether Anglican or Roman Catholic — and is reminding us that religious (brothers, sisters) are ideally a sign to the church of its unity, in that encounters between religious of the different obediences inevitably result in the awareness that what divides can *almost* be forgotten in the experience of what unites.

In this connection we must remember with special gratitude Father Eric Doyle of the Order of Friars Minor — a Roman Catholic friar with a big place in his heart for Anglican friars. His recent death has taken from us an active friend of SSF whose work has done much to deepen the understanding and brotherhood of Franciscans in England with different church allegiances. This is not to say that SSF is now without friends in the ranks of the RC Franciscans — there have grown up over the years many contacts between members of all three orders. I am sure that in the following of such developments, and in an alertness for fresh ones, lies a very significant part of our own renewal in Christ.

Renewal — change — is it all happening as a consequence of purely human social factors, because young men and women come to us with the expectations of the 80s? Are they a consequence of our membership of a changing church? Do they just happen? Is there any sense in which

they happen because we *decide* that they shall? Do we have any freedom in Christ, or are we just straws afloat, carried along on the current? These are ever present questions in an age of change. We seek answers to such questions in a return to the gospel of Christ, and in the life of his disciple Francis; this is an unremitting search in which for the last fifteen years we have been faithfully and patiently led by our Minister General, Brother Geoffrey.

As you read this, we are in the process throughout the four provinces of SSF of electing his successor, who should take office on 1st April. You are asked to pray for all who take part in the election, that they may be guided by God in their choice — and for the brother who for the next six years will follow Brothers David and Geoffrey as our third Minister General.

New men The seven postulants who came in September have already made a good contribution to our life and we hope that they will be clothed before Christmas. Geoff Mason, Hugh Cobbett, Paul King, Peter Kevern, Jonathan Gore, Hugo Lane, Paul Buckley will no doubt be working out their names in community and will appear on the list of brothers. Please pray for them and that many more may be drawn to share the life of such opportunity. Talking of lists of brothers, Eric, while remaining listed for this house, has moved out to 2 Keward Walk, Wells, to cut down the immense travelling which his job with the deaf mission requires. He is immensely active; he brought a group of young, totally-deaf, people for a weekend here in the autumn. I intend to ask him to speak at one of our big occasions here fairly soon. **Reginald** back from the antipodes has joined us here at least for the time being and we are very glad to have him. **Nathanael** is being added to our house list while he continues in Swansea and his wider mission within the Welsh Province, as does **Raphael**, who is at Lampeter and who spends some of his vacations here. **James and Rameen** went to Glasshampton in the autumn and **Ambrose** goes to Scunthorpe in early December.

Review of our work. Like the other houses, we reviewed our work here, using a stimulating paper about mission from Ivor Smith-Cameron. We were grateful for the help of some friends from outside, who gave a Sunday afternoon and evening to reflect with us on our priorities. There were good suggestions to make us think but the message I was left with was 'do what you are doing and do it well'. This is quite a challenge. So much of our work is with people, people of all kinds who come and share our life for a time. The Guesthouse has had the Cardiff Ramblers Club, the Third Order priests' retreat, various youth and school groups, and has been continuously full. Bernard House has had some short and some long term stayers, some of whom have moved to Clare or another house, and there have been many day groups, and also our summer camps. The camps this year were a great joy, the youth camp being larger than ever and the families camp up to capacity. Dates for these next year are 26th July to 5th August (Mrs. Elizabeth Stirling, of 14 Redmiles Lane, Ketton, Stamford, Lincs., does all the bookings) and Youth Camp 9th to 19th August (bookings to Brother Philip Bartholomew here or at the School; 15 plus; groups with

leaders welcomed). We have just heard that our tertiaries Bishop John Dennis and his wife Dorothy are hoping to come to the Families Camp.

Out and about Many of us have been away on mission this autumn. Bernard was at St. John's Malone, Belfast, and was there when the Brighton bomb happened. He was very grateful for so many prayers which brought great blessing to the mission, and returned with many stories of interesting conversations with people about the troubles. There was quite a challenge from one group about the English interventions and the need for penitence, of course, the crucial question is 'penitence into what?'. A visit to the Redemptorist Clonard Monastery, near the peace line, was very full of atmosphere; the ecumenical role of Father Jerry Reynolds there calls for our prayers. Incidentally in William Johnston's new book 'Christian Mysticism Today' there is a powerful chapter on the Irish situation near the end. Those who have read his other books would not realise he was brought up on the Falls Road. On the other side of it, Bernard met several people who felt that Mr. Paisley was their spokesman and champion. Others are committed to reconciliation through integrated education, through mixed marriages, through political parties, like the Alliance Party, and through personal friendships and service. Bernard was warmly approving of what our brothers and sisters are attempting there. Others from here, of course, have also been on missions this autumn, including Samuel, Paul, Stephen Francis, John Francis, Reginald and Ambrose, if there was room, their adventures would make good reading.

Community Days Our recent community day visitor was Father Peter Saunders, O.P., who is now chaplain of Leweston School, but who served in South Africa for many years before receiving 24 hours' notice from the Government that he should leave, and then in Washington. He spoke about justice and peace, including the nuclear issue, and of his experience of the way the American Catholic Bishops had gone about their statement 'The Challenge of Peace'. It was very valuable to be able to discuss with a man whose well-trained and lively mind was applied theologically to current social issues. Incidentally, he came here originally as a Sherborne school-boy in Peter's day. Kenneth's friend Roland Tarr, who also came with his family here ages ago, is now the Dorset Coast development officer with the County Council and he showed us lovely slides of this marvellous part of the world.

Sickness and Health. Raymond Christian after further surgery is back with us, valiant as ever. Patrick is mainly well. Roger has a bit more trouble. Kenneth is patiently waiting for his hip-replacement operation, which we hope will be behind him by the time you receive this. He is very grateful for so many who have sent good wishes.

Cerne Abbas Our friend Hugh Mumford, the Vicar there, took a group to Compton for a weekend retreat, which Bernard led, and the parish is looking ahead to a mission in a few years' time. Visitors to the Friary may be reminded that it is best to arrive via Sherborne, Dorchester or Yeovil, not via Cerne Abbas. Incidentally, a coach, Bristol to Weymouth, now stops at Holywell Cross (what we usually have called 'the Evershot turn' — on the A37) which is the nearest point to the Friary.

Stigmata. We had a very large crowd and much appreciation, both for the sermon of Martin Marriott and the talks by Su Davies and Simon Peter; it was a good day, weather excepted. On Saturday, 29th December we expect friends for our usual post-Christmas entertainment and with this Franciscan, there will be details of Lent quiet days, etc. The brothers look forward in December to the Community retreat which Richard Eyre, the

Dean of Exeter, is conducting; the new novices hope to go to Compton in February for Gordon Mursell's retreat. Some of us are going on a reading course in January about individually-conducted Ignatian retreats. John Francis has been on a course about young people's programmes and retreats with the Salesian brothers at Newbury. John's life profession at Compton on 29th October was a very happy day and we rejoice in his commitment.

Wayfarer's Accommodation. Through the generosity of friends, we have now reached half way in our appeal for £21,000 for new ablutions, sitting room and dormitory for the men who come here from no fixed address. The contract price turns out to be £24,000 and there will be some furnishing, but we have gone ahead and work is due to begin on 4th December and to be completed in 14 weeks. We plan to name that part of the building 'Giles House' and greatly look forward to the easing of pressure in Francis House and to making better provision for those for whom this Friary was originally started. We expect many to be with us for Christmas and once again want to thank all whose continual help and encouragement does so much to keep us going, and to wish them blessings for 1985.

ALNMOUTH In August we welcomed Timothy to our family. For a while our choir was full. Sadly we said goodbye last month to Ian Andrew who decided not to go on to Profession. Ian made a very good contribution to the life of the Friary. Richard spent October at Pilton and other brothers have been away, so our family of brothers has been an average of six. Alfred makes regular visits to the hospital for checks and is to begin a course of chemo-therapy in November.

In September six of us made a retreat together on Holy Island. We stayed at Marygate House which is run by Kate Tristram, a tertiary. It was by way of an experiment and we thought afterwards it was very good, particularly as we were all from one house.

The first week of November we held a Community week. There were no guests that week which helped us to spend more time together. We tackled a major work project together and had a change over of our jobs for that week. On the last day we had an AI day when we had brothers from the houses on the AI joining us.

November 3rd was the day when we looked at ourselves, the Friary and its mission role. We invited some people to be with us and help us to see ourselves as others see us and discover better our role as Franciscans in the North East.

In one year we have had one thousand guests (including 400 wayfarers) staying with us. The latest group of guests came from Alloa. We have also been involved with groups who stayed at the Boys' Club in the village, the most recent being a group of young people from a comprehensive school in a village which has featured on TV because of the strife over striking and working miners. Groups have come for the day included the local U.R.C. Council and the Alnwick Parish Council.

Our Franciscan Festival has always been held in Newcastle, this year we crossed the Tyne and it took place at S Hild & Bede College in Durham. This proved to be a successful venture and we hope to change the venue each year, moving between the two dioceses.

At times over the past year we have been overwhelmed by the frequency and numbers of groups that have come for the day. We also became stretched with outside engagements from finding it difficult to say no over the telephone and coping with the backlog of

requests facing a planning committee meeting every six weeks. At a recent House Chapter we agreed to a new system which is now in operation. On Mondays all requests for visits or engagements are left in a folder for the brothers to examine. On Tuesday at morning conference we go through the requests with all the brothers together. This means that it does not fall on the Guardian or any other brother to have to say yes or no over the telephone and all requests are dealt with within seven days. We also made the decision to limit the number of large groups visiting the Friary for the day to two per week. We would ask those who wish to come or have requests to write in good time, and providing the system works as well as it has up to now, they will receive a quick reply.

As part of the Durham diocesan celebration of Saint Cuthbert a Youth Pilgrimage was held from Lindisfarne, via Alnmouth to Monkwearmouth. Jude, Bridget, Judith and Paul James took part in what turned out to be a very arduous few days. Next year will be the celebrations for the anniversary of the Venerable Bede. These will be centred on Saint Paul's, Jarrow, and some communities will be sending Brothers or Sisters to stay there for a period so that visitors will see and hear about the religious life today.

The Franciscan camp for young people at Budle Bay will not be taking place in 1985. For a variety of reasons we will be unable to run it and the Committee on Mission have asked us to be more involved in running a camp in the future. We felt that it would not be possible to host the camp at its usual numbers either under canvas or in the house. We are discussing and planning for perhaps a small group in the house in 1985 and a larger group in accommodation near the Friary, but not in tents, in 1986. Many people will be disappointed, as we are, that the camp that has been going for so long and which has been so very much a part of our ministry in the North East should not take place even for only one year. Please pray that we may find the way to resume the camp at a time which reflects closely the situation in which it came into being 63 years ago. We would be grateful for suggestions, ideas or any other contributions.

As I write this the northern winter is beginning, the trees are becoming bare and the sun rises after we do and goes down before Evening Prayer. However, whatever the weather we look forward to a warm winter within the house. With the generous assistance of Clem Gault and the hard work of Edmund and others the heating system is installed. Over the past few months we have been able to plug up some of the holes and cover with hardboard the uneven floors that were left behind after the system was installed. We are also very grateful for a gift of 'seconds' industrial carpet which has already made the house warmer as well as quieter and cleaner. We hope we will now lose the reputation of being the place where you go for retreat and come away with a cold!

COMPTON DURVILLE Since this house last sent news for the Chronicle, we have been recovering from the shock of Bridget's death and settling down happily under our new guardian, Hilary. There have inevitably been comings and goings — the former include Leonore who has returned here after five years in east London and Eleanor Bridget, back from Paddington. Veronica Roberts first came for three weeks as a working guest, to return shortly as a postulant. Now the day has come for her clothing, as Veronica Luke, on October 31st. First among the goings is Jean, at last off to U.S.A. after a very protracted wait for the necessary formalities. She's filled the time working in the kitchen and doing valiant work with the

sewing machine. Hannah goes back to London, this time to Orsett Terrace and Julian. Barbara has decided to withdraw — we miss her cheery presence. Jeannette has also withdrawn. We wish them well.

The house remains busy with the coming and going of guests, for retreats, holidays or just to be here for a few days. Many groups come for the whole or part of a day, using the conference room and requiring frequent cups of tea or coffee. These groups are very varied, clergy, deanery gatherings, M.U., confirmation candidates. The new project is gradually coming into its own — classes of children of differing ages come to see the place, the project, our life and to ask, listen and learn. Then there is the work outside in which the sisters are involved, speaking at meetings, taking part in missions, camps and various kinds of projects, so numbers here at one time are never high.

It would have been difficult to get through the busy summer and allow sisters their holidays, if it had not been for the help of several willing working guests, who gave far more than the help of a pair of hands. Eleri is an old friend, who was with us for two months, then Carol and Susan each came for a month, all fitting in well. Finally Uta, from Germany, having a change between school and university, is here for six months. She has slotted in so easily and completely, sharing in our whole life — worship, work and recreation. A further source of help has been a tertiary couple, who after retiring, have come to live in the hamlet. Roger and Anne Mortimer spend most of the day working in the garden, we are beginning to wonder how we managed before they came!

One of the long term residents, Dorothy Elliston, had an accident early in September, falling and fracturing her thigh. (She had made such valiant progress after her stroke the previous summer). She was in hospital for three weeks, but has now returned to us and is once more making every effort to resume at least partial independence.

The last few weeks have been disrupted by the presence of workmen, first in the chapel. The high altar has now gone. The welcome space this gives, is still unfilled as we think carefully how best to use it. We've also had workmen in the convent, replacing some of the water pipes and the boiler; the situation required careful planning so there was always water when and where needed!

Finally it has been a period of many special occasions. Open Day was held as usual in June, on a lovely sunny day, so that most of the programme, which took a slightly new form, could take place out of doors. Then Jeanette Gascoigne was clothed in July, becoming Jeanette Margaret. The first of September saw the first profession of one of our New Zealanders. Maureen made her first vows in a full chapel, happily her parents and other relations being there. Her parents had made a special trip over from New Zealand for the occasion. Our first New Zealander, Eleanor Bridget, now to be known as Bridget, made her life profession on the feast of St. Simon and St. Jude, along with John Francis from the Hilfield friary. This was the first time we had had a joint function of such importance here, and the chapel was packed to capacity for a joyous and moving service. It was followed by a marvellous spread using both conference and project rooms, and provided jointly by the convent and friary kitchens. Mr. and Mrs. Upton, Bridget's parents, had also braved the trip from New Zealand and stayed with us for a few days. They were entirely at home from the start, sharing in all that went on and giving so much. New Zealand is certainly giving full support, which augurs well for the future. We have much, much to be thankful for.

PLAISTOW

Brother Austin's arrival in mid-September took our number of brothers and sisters engaging in ministry locally back to four. He has a solid, reassuring kind of presence which, combined with a certain flair for the practical, means that he is going to be very useful in the house and the neighbourhood. His skills as a printer have already been used to extend the little printing resource that we have in our old chapel.

Sister Beatrice has given up her work as a District Nurse to take over the co-ordination of Helping Hands (our good neighbour scheme) from Brother Julian. This has freed Julian and Austin to explore other possibilities for local ministry, which are not sufficiently formed yet to be able to share with you, and also means that we can overcome any problem of Helping Hands being identified with one person.

The house has been in utter chaos for the past two months as a group from Community Industry have built a small extension on the back. As cement was ground into the floors, the drains blocked for the fourth time, and a rather uneven wall rose from the ground, some misgivings were voiced around the place as to the wisdom of the project. However the finished result is quite pleasing, and means that the office is now workable (no gale force winds howling through in the winter), and the outside toilet is now incorporated into the house. The young men were quite considerate by and large, though youthful energy managed to demolish four of our chairs! We would also like to record our gratitude for the generous gift from a tertiary which enabled us to complete this work.

Among our summer visitors was an R.C. priest from Brazil who has seventy of the base ecclesial communities in his parish. We hear a great deal about liberation theology these days, and it was fascinating to hear of the practical Christian living of the poor in which this theology is rooted.

Our London Festival at St. John on Bethnal Green seemed to be much appreciated by all who came. The hard work that is now put into this event, and the higher degree of participation by all who come, has made it a more engaging and stimulating experience. The Vicar of St. John's has kindly agreed to us using the place for our Festival next year on October 5th.

For over two years some of us in London have talked about the possibility of having a place which we could use as a 'carceri'. We drew blanks on various ideas, but now the Vicar of St. Mary of Eton, Hackney Wick, has offered us the use of a room in his church tower which looks suitable. It is accessible, surrounded by motorways and tower-blocks yet remarkably quiet, and we are busy rifling our resources to equip it — the only problem is that the nearest 'loo' is down 27 steps and across a courtyard! It also relinks us with our past as CSF were involved with that church for many years, Sister Mary Francis living there as recently as 1977.

A commercial plug! If anyone would like postcards of the rose-window mural on the side of our house, they are available from here at 20p each + postage.

As this is written Austin and Julian with a party of a further 23 people, almost all local, are landing in Leningrad for a visit to the Soviet Union which grew from a peace vigil we held last year (1983). The group includes an R.C. Sister, a Buddhist monk, a Quaker, atheists, actors, social workers and unemployed, and, whilst we wait to see what happens on this trip, we are sure that some kind of living parable will be enacted on the road to Moscow!

Firstly, a tribute to all the brothers who have over the years ministered in **PILTON** Pilton, because many of the good and positive things now happening here are due to their ground work. Among the many joyous things we share with you is an ever-growing congregation, both in number and Christian awareness at Saint David's. One of our former servers, Stephen Mitchell, is pursuing the course: 'A Year for God', run by the Bishop of Lewes, for those who feel called to some form of ministry, ordained or lay.

Another bitter/sweet joy we would share with you is the ever-increasing ministry to teenage drug addicts and thieves. Bitter, because of their sad plight, so many broken or disrupted homes. Sweet in their trust of the brothers. This in turn leads to more prison visiting. Do please pray for God's blessing on all of this and on the ministry to ex-hospital patients who are regular callers.

Space does not permit me to say much, except that a substantial sum of money has been sent to the Ethiopia Appeal from Saint David's.

Dominic and Peter continue to minister to all sorts and conditions, from the Primary School assembly to the CAB group.

We are proud of an ever-growing group of young people who serve at the altar, deeply committed to our Lord.

We write this in mid-November, thinking of Christmas and send our love and best wishes for 1985.

ST. FRANCIS HOUSE, SCUNTHORPE September 8th saw the back lawn crowded with visitors who had come to share the day with us. This marked the blessing of the house and the licensing of the brothers by the Bishop of Grimsby, David Tustin. It was very fortunate that the weather was fine because nearly 150 came and they would never have all fitted into the house. It was so good to have brothers and sisters from Alnmouth, Liverpool, Paddington and Stepney with us as well as local people from the churches in and around Scunthorpe, but we were delighted that so many of our brothers and sisters from the Third Order and Companions came to share in their local SSF houses — I say this because so many of them have become really involved in it and have been of enormous help to us in setting up the house and furnishing it. It was also pleasing to welcome a group of sisters from the Convent of the Presentation in Scunthorpe — no less than five of them — which was an indication of their interest and goodwill.

However, we were brought swiftly down to earth again by the withdrawal of Jonathan from the noviciate in November. He had spent seven months with us and earned our gratitude for his culinary skills here. Jonathan is a priest and so we wish him farewell as he returns to parochial life. On 1st December we were joined by Ambrose, straight from Hilfield and (hot) from the kitchen there. We wish him well as he begins to look around Scunthorpe at the possibilities and opportunities for ministry here.

Anselm continues to spend part of his time here, but at the time of writing he has been 'On Safari' around the rest of the province since September.

Christopher carries on with the secretarial work as well as some other jobs like The Franciscan subscriptions. He gets a chance to develop some local ministry, too, and

invitations have been steadily increasing as we become more known in and around Scunthorpe. One recent contact has been with the local Sixth Form College and a couple of visits have really shown that many ordinary, thinking teenagers today have almost no Christian background, but nevertheless have a wish to hear from committed Christians about their experience of things spiritual.

Please keep us in your prayers as we live out our vocations and seek for ways to serve God here in Scunthorpe among his people.

STEPNEY The summer seems to have been a time of much coming and going, though our basic group of four has not changed in personnel. Keith's holidays took him to Russia with a friend for three weeks, which they found a 'mind-blowing' experience. Part of Maureen's summer wanderings included attending the Greenbelt Festival, a huge Christian arts festival, but offering a wide variety of seminar topics and styles of prayer and worship as well.

Contacts of an ecumenical nature have increased as interests and friendships have deepened. From time to time we enjoy the company of some Roman Catholic religious of the Society of Mary, and Steve Woods, our local URC minister comes to pray with us on one morning a week. It was a joy to be at the ordination of Jackie, Steve's wife, a few weeks ago. Two of us attended a Pax Christi day conference for religious on Peace, and were much encouraged by the number of people there.

With autumn we have settled again into our basic employment routines — Sheila teaching at a nearby school, Simon Peter doing work for the Bishop's Lay Training course, Keith on a housing association project and Maureen as a home help for the local borough. Our 'optional extras' include involvement with various committees, visiting people or having them visit us; preaching and peace and justice issues. After two years, the chapel badly needed attention so now it has been repainted and reorganised. It continues to be a place of enrichment for our lives.

WELLCLOSE HOUSE — BIRMINGHAM The past six months has seen changes in our personnel, which in turn has led to changes in our Community life, our worship and our work for Wellclose House.

In September Dianne left us to go to Paddington and Noël joined us from N.U.L.

In August Mavis White left us to take up new work in Sheffield. Toni Wright joined the Wellclose House staff in August and works as a Care Assistant and in October Julie Blake was appointed Deputy Warden. Both Toni and Julie are non-resident though they both take their turn with sleeping-in duties.

Now that the house has been completed and we are all under one roof, plus the fact that we have two lay staff, it is possible to meet together without interruption and so have more community life. We can also worship together regularly and certainly there has been a marked improvement in our chapel life. Actually, having a chapel has helped!

On October 3rd the house and chapel were duly blessed by the Bishop of Aston, and the Sacrament reserved. This was a very happy occasion and meant so much to us after the years of upheaval and rebuilding. The girls joined in fully and all asked to have their rooms

blessed. The Bishop gladly obliged and all were delighted to receive a personal blessing from him; Christians, Hindu, Muslim, et al.

That same week we had our Open Day, the first for a few years now and it was good to welcome friends old and new. All were very impressed at the work which had been carried out.

Another benefit of having a full staff is that we have been able to step up our level of care and commitment to the girls. Nine girls have been resident for most of the last six months.

Liaison with other agencies has improved and this has been particularly so with the Police. There has been a marked increase in the number of Asian girls we have received in who have run away from families or arranged marriages. Police liaison has improved our ability to cope with Asian girls and their families and helped keep the lines of communication open in a safe and neutral territory.

Having people from different cultures and religions makes life very interesting and it is remarkable how accepting the girls are of each other. Our Chapel or 'praying room' as it is sometimes called, was recently used by one of the Asian girls for a 'service of light' during the Hindu 'Duvali' festival. Several of the other girls pop in now and then for a 'quick pray'.

Judith is doing an 'In Service' social work training, one day a week at Bournville College. The course is very much geared to the work situation and the local community, so hopefully, all will benefit.

The Archbishop's Commission to Inner City Areas came to our local church and the people from the local community certainly gave them a vivid picture of life in this area and the needs of the community.

In conclusion, now that we have adequate staff and a place to live and worship in, it is tempting to take on too much. However, we feel it is more important to assess what we are already doing and the wear and tear on personnel, before any other commitments are made.

The leaves have now fallen and the splendour of our garden has taken on its winter twiggy tracery. Never have the roses been so good, both in the garden and decorating the house, and this year with the sunshine and leafy shade, our guests have really enjoyed finding places in the garden in which to relax and ponder.

It seems ages since Noël left us after almost a year here and we are glad to know that she is in better health at Birmingham. We have missed her about the house. Now we have reshuffled and are pleased that Gwenfryd Mary is one of the family. She is doing the cooking and setting about the reorganisation of the library. Veronica continues to take pride in her laundering and still finds time to pursue her hobbies too.

Patricia Clare's profession on 15th December made it the second such occasion to take place here in 1984 — the first being Judith's last summer.

Life in the house seems to go on from group to group and guest to guest, punctuated very frequently with tea and sandwiches for wayfarers. That's one side of things; the complementary one is the growing number of requests to help in leading and teaching on aspects of the faith, and prayer. Participation in prayer group leadership sessions and various diocesan involvements foster a wider area of work, but the incidental talking across the meal table is just as valid.

Gwenfryd Mary — as a newcomer, is very impressed, she says, by the warmth of clergy and people towards the house. We who live here — all of us — remark from time to time how much we have appreciated the stimulus and kindness of interesting and interested guests. It is a very humbling experience to discover that the house is so valued, and to hear straightforward and honest affirmation in all kinds of different ways — we thrive on it!

A real joy day in the diocese was the enthronement of Bishop Keith Sutton on 3rd November. The setting of the cathedral, beautiful vestments, the music (including brilliant fanfares) and the perfect timing all produced an occasion so strikingly simple and dignified that Gwenfryd Mary and Eileen Mary both had to fish for a handkerchief! It was good to be part of it all and now we look forward to welcoming Bishop Keith to the house — certainly for the house Festival on 1st June 1985 — if not before — and we pray that he will be greatly blessed in his ministry in the diocese.

Brother Ramon writes:

GLASSHAMPTON

On 1st July Brother Benedict drove me from Hilfield to take my place as Guardian here at Glasshampton. We stopped just 100 yards short of the monastery and shared together in prayer both for Hilfield and for Glasshampton. It was a great joy and help to have Bill Lash on hand to initiate me into the mysteries of Glasshampton administration!

I was made very welcome by the professed brothers John, Lawrence Christopher, Tristram, Gregory and Justin and they have been a means of constant support during these first few months. I overlapped with the four novices who were preparing to leave after their period at Glasshampton, but we had a fruitful evaluation meeting in which there was honesty, straight talking and good humour about the life here. On 1st September John Kenneth, Simon, Rameen and James arrived fresh from the novice conference. They are so very different from one another and work together so well among themselves and with the rest of the house. The one essential rule of charity, together with a liberal dose of humour, holds us together within the context of prayer.

With the arrival of a new Guardian there are bound to be some changes, but my understanding of Glasshampton is that it should continue to be the house of prayer which the Society needs, with an ever-deepening experience of the life of prayer in contemporary ways.

We have carpeted the office, entrance and friars' common room with good second hand carpeting (thank you, Birmingham house!) and are now in the process of painting and decorating the five guest rooms and chapel in preparation for the laying of new complete carpeting of entrance, guest cloister, guest rooms, narthex and chapel, with a sturdy door to replace the curtain between guest cloister and narthex.

We are paying attention to our liturgical life and have initiated an hour of meditation on Fridays before Compline, saying the Jesus Prayer corporately on alternate Fridays, with a led meditation on the other Fridays. This is open to brothers, guests and friends.

We are giving thought to the ways in which personally and corporately we are to deepen the Society's commitment to prayer in this house, but this is an on-going examination and pilgrimage. All the brothers are in good or fairly good health, and it is good to hear visitors say that John is his old sturdy self! David is at present spending a few months with the Benedictine community at Limont, and Gregory is spending his holiday with him. We

keep in touch with Wilfrid in Hereford, and it is with great joy that we shall welcome the return of Alban in December just prior to my life profession here on 21st. Anselm will, of course, be with us then, and the Bishop of Hereford will receive the life vows.

There is great joy in serving the Lord and the Society here with my brethren. We hope to deepen our life of prayer in the Holy Spirit, and encourage you to pray for us.

Brother Hugh writes:

TANZANIA Masasi is in Southern Tanzania about two hours journey by small aeroplane from Dar-es-Salaam. Christianity was brought there by Anglicans in 1876 and the separate diocese created fifty years later. It was there that the writer went recently to conduct the diocesan clergy retreat in the beautiful cathedral which sits below the towering granite topped Mtandi Hill.

Fifty clergy arrived from as far away as 150 miles. One priest had walked thirty-five miles. After the retreat and an Ordination in which the Bishop, Richard Norgate, made seven new deacons, two new Companions were received into the Society of St. Francis.

At the same time the Bishop of Dar-es-Salaam, Christopher Mlangwa, was inaugurating a teaching and revival mission at one of the local city churches. There were several days of evening services: testimonies by laymen, two hour sermons, prayers, laying hands on the sick, the casting out of unclean spirits. All of the brothers at Dar-es-Salaam attended at least part of the programme.

Brother Petro has been working in a new mission district a few miles from Mtoni friary. Brother Edmund has been applying a scientific ruler to many aspects of our material life. As a group all the brothers are embarking on a welcome assessment of our life and work as a whole. We are looking forward to some positive and practical decisions.

It is a pleasure to record the recent profession in first vows of Brothers Julius and Shephard; also the novicing of Brothers Marko and Mathias. We have been saddened by the departure and release from life vows made four years ago of Brother Kenneth Yona.

So we thank God for his many blessings to us, pressing on, as Saint Paul says "to that which lies ahead".

Brother Robert Hugh writes...

NEWS FROM THE

AMERICAN PROVINCE

Elsewhere in this issue you will find some memories of Brother Stephen who died just two days after this Province celebrated sixty-five years since its foundation, truly the end of an era.

Highlights in the past quarter included a standing-room-only congregation in the cathedral in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, when Sebastian was one of five candidates for the diaconate, and John Rohim made his life profession. I had been invited to conduct the retreat for the diocesan clergy, the ordinands, and our friars. As there appears to be no realistic prospect of a permanent place of our own within the next few years, Dunstan will not be returning to Trinidad, and Michael Davis will not be extending his stay there past this year. Desmond and Sebastian

continue to engage in parish ministry and John Rohim has started his final year at Codrington College.

I spent St. Francis Day in New York, and we had a family celebration for our friars, sisters and tertiaries. I received the renewal of vows of our professed tertiaries, including Bishop Desmond Tutu, visiting this term at General Seminary, who was our celebrant and preacher. All this just days before we celebrated again with him upon his receiving the Nobel Peace prize.

Our Brooklyn brothers have left Calvary and St. Cyprian's rectory, with the departure of its rector Fr. Ted Chase who had invited us there. Their new address will be found on the inside back cover of this issue, and we hope that this will remain until the project for rehabilitating an abandoned building as our permanent home in Brooklyn has been accomplished.

I joined our Poor Clares for their Chapter, as also did Sister Mary Catherine who was able to fly in from San Francisco. There are three women who hope to be testing their vocation with them by the new year, so please keep them in your prayers.

This was followed by the Third Order Chapter at Little Portion, where it was recognised that the growing numbers (over 700, with a third of these in formation) made a full-time Chaplain very desirable, and they hope to budget for this.

We seized the opportunity of all being at Mount Sinai for Cecilia, Mary Philomena, Dee Dobson and myself to spend time together as a leadership group to explore how we could best give each other mutual support and fulfil our responsibility to maintain the unity of the whole Province.

On the West Coast new ministries include: Dominic, now a state-licensed registered nurse works night shifts at the spinal trauma unit of the Franklin hospital; Derek is parish secretary at St. John's Church, Don volunteers as a lay chaplain at San Francisco General hospital; Cecilia teaches two days a week with seriously handicapped children; and I am filling-in for Catherine Joy during her year of study, with the Bay Area Seafarers' Service and Merchant Marine Library.

Two brothers will soon be keeping significant anniversaries: John-Charles his 25th of consecration as a bishop on November 30; and Derek his 25th of ordination as a priest on December 19.

THE COMMUNITY OF**ST. FRANCIS, SAN FRANCISCO**

We welcomed to the family Amanda Harrison who was made a novice in October and Jean who returned to us from Britain in November.

Catherine Joy enjoys life at General Theological

Seminary in New York, but does not enjoy New York! Susanne Elizabeth, who is there too, is taking a course in Clinical Pastoral Education as well as working hard at housecleaning to help support Catherine Joy. I happened to be visiting these sisters when our Third Order brother, Bishop Desmond Tutu was also there teaching, heard that he had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. It was a great day at the seminary and we Franciscans were just glowing!

The house on Army Street has been greatly improved by some interior remodelling, repairs and painting; we now need the wherewithal to make the chapel quieter — the traffic is always heaviest at our worship times.

The joint Provincials' house on 40th Avenue enjoys comparative quiet, but at the cost of being frequently shrouded in sea fog, while the rest of the city is basking in sunshine.

Our loving greetings and prayers for this new year.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA
CUSTODY

Since the last issue of *The Franciscan*, there has been some very sad news from our Custody. On Good Friday, accompanied by Brother Andrew, Brother

Alfred flew back to the UK for specialist treatment as it was discovered he was suffering from cancer. His departure under such circumstances is a serious blow to our work here and has left us much saddened.

Brother Alfred arrived in P.N.G. on Wednesday in Holy Week: twenty-two years ago and had worked here ever since. His knowledge of the country, its people and the languages (Motu, Tok Pisin and Orokaiva) made his contribution to the work of the Society and the Church an invaluable one. His experience and understanding helped many new expatriate Brothers when they encountered difficulties in living in a strange culture. Alfred's departure from Port Moresby was all the more difficult for him and the Brothers as the doctors would not allow him to travel back here to Popondetta to say goodbye to us and to his many friends in the parish and Diocese where he had been working. Before he left, the Provincial Minister, Brother Philip, and Archbishop George Ambo flew to Moresby to take part in a moving service of Anointing and the Laying on of Hands for Alfred at St. Francis Church, Koke, the parish where Alfred had spent many years ministering before. We pray for him daily that the healing mercies of God may restore him to health for we miss him very much.

Brother Alfred's departure has meant a major rethinking as to our role and function at the Christian Community Centre in Popondetta. We have no priest brother in the Custody, so the Cathedral parish is helping in providing the daily Mass there. Brother Samson Amoni is now in charge, helped by Brother Elias. Brother Philip has been staying there, and travels between the Centre and the Friary so the Friary brothers can have Mass at least three times a week.

On Sunday June 24th, the Feast of the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, Brother Grayson and Brother Graydon, made their first vows before the Provincial Minister in the Friary Chapel at Haruro.

The Brothers from the Friary continue in their ministry to the local villages given to our care by the Cathedral parish. This entails visiting each Friday and often means staying overnight if distances are too great. The novices are teaching Religious Instruction in two Community Schools, and the professed in the local high school. In July, Brother Joseph will be leading a team of novices and professed on a three-week mission to the parish of Sakarina in the Managalas district in the mountains behind Popondetta. He will be leading another group in September to the parish of Agenahambo, visiting each of the seven main centres in the parish in three weeks. The cocoa plantation is looking good and promises to provide some income when the trees mature and begin bearing. Martyr's School has 'lent' us three goats, a billy and two pregnant nannies, which has increased our herd. Payment for looking after their goats is to be in kind — we can keep the kids. Improvement to the fencing means that we can plan ahead now and look forward to selling some goats to the local villagers and some Filipinos in town who regard goat meat as a delicacy.

Our work in P.N.G. is limited by the lack of life-professed Brothers, and we are hoping that a priest Brother from one of the other Provinces may be able to come and take Brother Alfred's place. We go in hope, trusting that God will show us what He will have us do, and that those men He is calling to serve Him as a Brother may hear and answer.

Brother Brian writes:-

AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND PROVINCE

One of the results of the 800th anniversary of the birth of Francis was the setting up of what is commonly called the 'Franciscan Family'. These notes are being written a few days after the family, composed of friars of the OFM, OFM Capuchin, our

own SSF and the Sisters of the Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood had met together for a day of reflection, fellowship and fun at Auckland. An impressive liturgy centred around the theme of peace, a vigorous game of softball, a general discussion on Franciscan affairs and some good simple food all contributed to the general joviality. These groups had met together earlier in the year for a common retreat led by the franciscan scholar Fr. Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap.

The brothers at Brisbane also joined with the OFM and the OFM Capuchin friars and the franciscan sisters to listen to a series of lectures given by the same Fr. Armstrong. In New South Wales the Roman Secular Franciscan Order invited Brian to speak at a franciscan seminar in Sydney which again was composed of friars, sisters and tertiaries of the various franciscan branches. Praise God that in these two countries there is the desire today to do as much as we can together and to support each other as franciscans. We have so much in common as franciscanism can cut across so many ecclesiastical barriers.

From time to time the noviciates of the various orders in Brisbane — Roman and Anglican — meet together for sharing and mutual support. When Bishop John Howe, former Executive Officer of the Anglican Communion and General Secretary of the Anglican Consultative council, spent an evening with the brothers at Brookfield he said he felt that ecumenism was a matter of the different streams converging and that the religious communities were perhaps better placed than most for this kind of convergence in trust and good will.

Three more Vietnamese refugees are now living at Brookfield, adjusting themselves to life in Australia. A member of the Third Order in Sarawak is hoping to test his vocation to the First Order at Brookfield as soon as a visa has been obtained. Kabay has been commissioned as a mission chaplain for the Torres Strait Islander community in Brisbane. By the time these notes are read the Mother of the Community of St. Clare will have spent a month visiting the Clares at Stroud. The Third Order in both Australia and New Zealand will have met for general Chapters, the brothers in Brisbane will have been in retreat led by Fr. David Richardson, Rector of Christ Church St Lucia, and the sisters at Stroud have been led in their retreat by Oliver Heyward, Bishop of Bendigo.

Brother Stephen

March 8, 1905 — September 16, 1984

Dee Dobson, Third Order Guardian writes:

The friar, the priest, the man: there is no separation. Many years ago, first meeting Stephen I felt an intenseness (probably from those penetrating black eyes); here was a rather rigid, austere, very proper friar. As I grew to love him I found a very different man. The idea that he was rigid and very proper flew out the window the first time I had to stop the station wagon because he and my children were playing too noisily in the back. His pleasure in the opera, a fine book, God's beauty were immeasurable. He was equally content dining in the finest or sitting in the back yard on vacation eating ice cream as he read in the warm rays of the sun.

Brother Stephen was the person who received my vow of profession in the Third Order. He was always ready to assist, to answer questions — no matter how many — to guide our reading, and above all to pray for us. One of my fondest memories was of Stephen celebrating a sunrise Mass at the beach one Thanksgiving (much to the amazement of some of the younger brothers). It was a beautiful morning, a fantastic sunrise, with just enough breeze to keep things moving — like sand and linens. After the Mass we cooked breakfast which somehow has never tasted so good since. One only had to be at a Mass that he celebrated to be aware not only of his reverence, but of how Christ-centred his being was.

Over the years his devotion, his warmth, the twinkle in his eyes and his keen wit never changed. Thanks be to God.

Brother Robert Hugh writes: Stephen's death marks the end of an era that began in 1929 when he joined O.S.F. straight from seminary, just as the Order moved to Little Portion Friary which had been the summer home of his grandparents.

Fifty years in life profession, fifty-four years a priest, Stephen served as mission preacher, urban priest in Chicago and Harlem, Third Order Chaplain, and Secretary for the Associates. He was Assistant Minister for a total of twenty-five years, and Guardian of Little Portion, and shared the whole gamut of life in the American Province of SSF.

At one level Stephen seemed rigid, severe, conservative, eccentric, with his strange mannerisms, word repetitions, and idiosyncratic rituals. But my memories of him are of his powerful social conscience, his unexpected ability to work through radical change, and his indomitable and earthy spirit.

When I first came to Little Portion Friary in 1967 it was Stephen who energised our joining him to march through the streets of Port Jefferson on Saturday mornings, in support of an Open Housing Ordinance.

On one of my visits with him during his last illness, he was in the Intensive Care Ward on a respirator and unable to speak. After some prayers and the laying-on of hands I was about to leave when I saw by his urgent gestures that he had a message for me. I gave him a pen and paper and he painfully wrote what I expected to be some final request or exhortation. Then I read it: "Been watching the Olympics on TV"!

At the funeral liturgy in San Francisco, Brother Dominic shared that at the end of his last visit with Stephen soon before his death, during which they looked at many things that

had been costly in his life as a friar, including a longish time outside community and his many years of poor health with emphysema, Stephen was able to say: "If I could go back to the beginning again, but knowing what I know now about what it would cost me, I should still do it all exactly the same"! And the name is Perseverance.

At the liturgy at Little Portion when his ashes were interred, a copy of the April 1981 Little Chronicle fell out of a prayer book. Inside was an article by Stephen entitled 'What can we expect in the Life to come?'. So let Stephen have the last words:

'It is certain that we will have a reward for our faithfulness. As for details, they are not given, both because they are beyond imagination, and also because we are called upon not to set our attention on the rewards. Of course there will be rewards, but for the lover that is secondary. We are called to love God for himself and for what he has done for us. Expect great things from God.'

Working with Cyrenians

BY JOHN TURNBULL



WHAT it's really like working with Cyrenians and single homeless people is not an easy matter to put on paper. Mainly because, although there are things to be done such as budgets, fund raising, correspondence, campaigning and so on, including attending meetings and more meetings, Cyrenians' real aim is to create a place that offers care and acceptance where there would otherwise be rejection; pride and self-respect instead of shame and resentment; warmth and comfort in a real home rather than the isolation that many single homeless people face. And these things aren't achieved by just doing something.

In St Matthew's Gospel Jesus is recorded as saying: 'Come, O beloved of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for when I was hungry you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me'. And when they asked him when they did these things for him, he replied: 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me'. I, for one, do not believe that he meant only soup runs for the hungry; rags and cast offs for the naked; hovels for the homeless, or costless handouts to anyone (although these things are better than nothing). He meant acceptance, understanding and the sort of compassion that leads to the love Jesus said we ought to have for one another. The sort of compassion that allows us to approach other people as individuals with particular needs of their own rather

than anyone else's assumption as to what those needs were. In most people the greatest need of all is simply to be loved and accepted.

Although the Cyrenian organisation is not strictly a Christian one, in that it has no formal links with any church and many of its committed members do not confess to any religious faith, its principles are firmly based on the gospel concept of acceptance and love.

Many of the homeless who come to us are victims as much of rejection by society, who showed little understanding of their problems, as they are of their own disabilities or addictions. They are simply people with nowhere to go and, more often than not, no one who really cares. People who are only too often labelled 'dossers'; 'winos'; 'won't works'; 'no goods'; 'drop outs' or worse. Some of these names may be partially true in a few cases, but they are mostly not only inaccurate but also offensive and the cause of anger to many of the homeless themselves. Very few people choose to be homeless; they aren't 'drop outs' because most have never been given the opportunity of being 'in', or they have been 'pushed out' by circumstances outside of their control. Often victims of broken homes, their own or their parents; lack of adequate education, or whatever. Reasons are endless ... as many as there are homeless people. Given the opportunity, many would love a job of some description. If there is a certain amount of heavy drinking — and it certainly isn't true that single homeless people are all heavy drinkers — it's little wonder considering the frustrations and rejections many face.

We in Cyrenians believe that any society that allows more and more of its members to become isolated and rejected, without any hope of fulfilment and human satisfaction, is a society in grave danger. We don't aim only to deal with people and their needs, but also to create communities which allow people to deal with themselves and get what they want for a better life of their choice.

* * *

We may be fairly clear of our aims, but the facts of the situation are anything but clear, and we mostly only just survive from crisis to crisis. No day is similar to the day before, and it's difficult to say at exactly what time the day actually begins, since generally speaking someone is up and about somewhere in the house twenty-four hours a day — mostly cooking themselves a snack between bigger snacks — in both of our present projects. We have few rules; three in fact — no violence in the house — no alcohol in the house (that is, in a bottle; in a person is another matter!) and no drugs in the house. Around this rather loose

structure anything can happen; and generally it does! Most Cyrenian projects, but not all, have full time volunteers living in the houses, not to do the 'work', for that must be shared by all, but with added responsibilities such as collecting the rents. Their position is that of living with the residents in a way that is not patronising or authoritative, but simply understanding and accepting.

We do realise that living in community is not always easy, and for some it does not provide the answer to their homelessness and isolation problems. So some of our residents may only stay a short time before moving on, and others choose to live with us for the rest of their lives. To both we are committed, and to those who move on our commitment can only mean that we must also play a very active part in campaigning for more understanding, more rights, less prejudice and more acceptance of homeless people and their needs in society at large.

Attitude change is always difficult, and when widely held attitudes are such that even a planning application, or the mere suggestion that more facilities should be provided for single homeless people, brings loud protests about 'attracting undesirables' or 'encouraging vagrancy' the task is even more difficult. There is no reason to believe that trying to provide answers to a problem actually encourages the problem to increase, any more than building orphanages increases orphans. Very few people choose to be homeless, it's too difficult a life for that, and it's no use hoping the problem will go away. There are over 100,000 single homeless people in this country and they must go somewhere, unless the undesirable and unacceptable methods of dealing with races or groups of people witnessed in recent history are to be followed. So the work of Cyrenians ought never to stop at providing facilities, but ought also to involve local politicians, caring organisations or any group, in the facts of homelessness, and ought generally to try to remove some of the misunderstandings and prejudices that exist in society. Articles, letters, talks, lobbying politicians, gaining and providing information all help and must be done, but the most important way we can say anything is the life of our houses and the residents' pride in them. A Cyrenian house is like any other home, with pets, etc., and ideally should not be noticeably different from any other house in the neighbourhood.

When you tell people you work for the Cyrenians, the immediate reaction is one of sympathy and the statement that it must be very difficult and traumatic. Well, there are the occasional outbreaks of violence, heavy drinking, bad standards of hygiene and toilet habits as

well as a good deal of bad language. All of which has to be overcome or tolerated and accepted. Most of the judgement as to what is acceptable or not is made by the residents themselves rather than any authority. But more than anything else it is rewarding and satisfying, and even at times great fun. More than that, it isn't really a job as much as a way of life which gets us deeply involved with people. People more richly coloured and eccentric than are to be found between the covers of many novels.

* * *

Cambridge Cyrenians, with whom I work, have two houses with twenty-two beds for both men and women, and we urgently need to expand. Hardly a day goes by when someone in real need doesn't have to be turned away for no better reason than that the houses are full. After years of seeking for new projects and houses, the next year may well see the opening of another residential house for seven residents as well as a day centre catering for those who don't need or want accommodation, but are just as much in need of acceptance and somewhere to go as those who need somewhere to sleep. Even if these two projects do not materialise, despite the advanced stage planning has got to, we will continue, whatever the obstacles, to strive to provide more and better facilities for men and women who would otherwise be homeless or without any opportunity of human fulfilment.

Things aren't perfect in Cyrenian houses, nor always hyper-efficient, but we believe that part of the merit of them is that everything is on a personal and human scale, and that, despite the problems that arrive the Cyrenian ideals continue to attract dedicated workers, and that the houses continue to provide shelter, home and protection to men and women who don't have much going for them.

John Turnbull is the organising secretary of the Cambridge Cyrenians.

Lead us from death to life,
from falsehood to truth;
Lead us from despair to hope,
from fear to trust;
Lead us from hate to love,
from war to peace;
Let peace fill our hearts,
our world, our universe.

Paul's Dance

Some Reflections on L'Arche

BY ANTHONY GIBBINGS

L'Arche ('the Ark') is a federation of communities in some fourteen countries devoted to helping the mentally handicapped to realise their potential in society.



PAUL was afraid. He was walking across a narrow bridge. He doesn't find this easy, just as he doesn't like going down steps, especially open staircases. Even when he is on firm ground he sometimes feels that it is not firm enough. When he is afraid, he panics, and this time it was those passing in cars who received the full force of his screams. Some drove slowly by, watching an embarrassed assistant, David, gently guide him through his fears, his panic and his anger, to the other side. One of the cars that approached was an open-topped sports car. As it moved along the electrically operated roof rolled smoothly forward and closed, and the windows were quickly wound closed too. The occupants had seen what was coming. It was Paul and David.

They had been walking through the Kent countryside for nearly a week, sleeping in church halls, eating in pubs and cafés or by the roadside. Each evening they were welcomed by the parishioners in the villages they passed through. They were part of a pilgrimage to Canterbury, which involved some 150 people from Arche communities in Britain, Ireland and Canada, walking with friends in seven groups, all converging on Canterbury Cathedral for Trinity Sunday, 1984.

On that Sunday morning the pilgrims gathered in Harbledown, a mile outside Canterbury, and processed to the cathedral, led by Richard Third, Bishop of Dover. Each person carried a small bell, an ancient symbol of the pilgrim. Some had them in their pockets, some wore them around wrists and ankles. The bishop attached his to his crozier.

Once outside the main door of the cathedral, we could hear the entry song being sung by the congregation and choir. As it came to an end, the great doors opened and the bishop led some 200 pilgrims and friends, many of them mentally handicapped, right down the aisle, where seats had been reserved on one side. In silence, the people waited — silence, except for the light jingling of 200 bells, shuffling of feet and whispered greetings between the pilgrims and the waiting congregation. The people were moved to see this motley band of awkward, slightly embarrassed,

very tired but deeply joyful pilgrims. We were received warmly into the hearts of the priests and people, into the heart of the Anglican Communion. We felt like poor pilgrims, with little to offer except the flowers that we had gathered on the roadside.

At the offertory the pilgrims took their flowers and laid them before the altar. Paul brought his flowers, laid them before the altar, and then moved towards some of the priests to kiss them and shake their hands. As he returned from the altar, he didn't just walk back with the others, but stood aside and did a little silent dance on the sanctuary for just a few seconds, and smiling returned to his place. When he is afraid, he cannot walk across a bridge: when he is at peace, he becomes a bridge himself!

At the communion people moved forward to receive Christ crucified and risen. Those who were not of the Anglican Communion (mostly Roman Catholics) went forward also and received a blessing from the priests. At the moment of communion we celebrated the pain of division, but in an atmosphere of simple joy and healing. The hurt remains, but all of us are together in it. At the end of the ceremony the sanctuary erupted in a festival of singing, dancing and clapping, as the pilgrims celebrated their arrival in the house of God.

Where, then, had the pilgrims come from? Why had they walked from London to Canterbury, and who were they?

L'Arche is a community where so-called mentally handicapped people and others live in small, family-sized groups. The size of any house is determined by the number of people who can sit around the same dining table, rather than by the number of beds available. In this way people get to know each other well and try to live a life in which the most vulnerable and rejected can belong. This is what most people expect from a family life and what most people claim. Whether most people feel that they get it is another matter. L'Arche communities try to help people find their place, and this usually means finding a home for their hearts. For the weak and vulnerable in our society that is perhaps obvious. For those who feel they have something to offer, it can be a struggle to admit that they have needs too. We all need a place to belong.

* * *

The pilgrims had come from communities where all the pain and joy which comes from daily contact with one another is lived through and celebrated in a challenging but healing way. They had come to Canterbury under the banner of 'Peace', the theme of the week. As we had become aware of the need for peace in our own hearts and in our daily community life, we were also aware of the need for peace in the church and in society.

People often come to L'Arche and talk of the peace they experience among those in the community. Of course the experience takes on a different colour once you join in the community! And yet, however strange, it is true that those who struggle to live at peace with one another in community become acutely aware of where peace is lacking, but also grow themselves in a kind of peace that they themselves cannot always feel. It takes a visitor to point it out.

To walk to Canterbury for peace, then, was not merely to celebrate a peace that we felt, nor even to pray for peace in the world, but was to grow in our understanding of what peace is, and to touch the source of peace within our hearts. Living close to other people, in community or on pilgrimage, who often can be suffering from rejection, confusion and anxiety, can be far from peaceful, and yet the daily struggle to build peace leaves a subtle impression on us, which draws us to stay close to the dilemmas, the paradox, which it poses.

L'Arche takes as its inspiration the Beatitudes. Somehow, some day and somewhere, we all have to reckon with these words of Jesus. When militarism, politics and even diplomacy are seen to fail; when psychology and counselling come up against the deepest wounds; when miracles of faith have done their healing, we are all still left with the simplicity of the gospel message — happy the poor in spirit, the gentle, those who mourn, those who hunger for justice, who are merciful, pure in heart and make peace, even though persecuted. Even though l'Arche communities, as everywhere else, use all the human skills and structures possible to bring life and liberty to handicapped people, they are also discovering, as are other groups all over the world, that mentally handicapped people have a gift, a grace if you like, for holding us before the beatitudes and the gospel message in a unique way. Who they are, what they live and how they live it, has something to say to us about who we are, what we are and what we often cannot easily live with — the simplicity of Jesus and his message.

In l'Arche communities we witness the meeting of two worlds, that of the simple heart, and that of the sophisticated head! — two cultures which need each other. Handicapped people need practical support and cannot live without the assistants who share their lives with them. The assistants cannot easily live with each other without the spontaneous gifts of the hearts of handicapped people.

However, this encounter is not plain sailing. Handicapped people have to face their feelings of rejection, perhaps confusion or lack of confidence when faced with the assistants. Assistants have to face those feelings too, and also the qualities of openness and spontaneity which

greet them in the faces of people so-called handicapped. What the gospel refers to as 'happy', history has often treated negatively. Most names for handicapped people have been negative — idiot, imbecile, deficient, sub-normal — all tell who a person is not. This implicit rejection is turned upside down in the beatitudes — and our culture is faced with a problem. Is it possible to live closely to this challenge to so much that we do and are? Is it even wise? When Saint Paul says, 'It was to shame the wise that God chose what is foolish by human reckoning, and to shame what is strong that he chose what is weak by human reckoning' (I Corinthians 1.27), he is not just giving a treatise on some religious paradox. It is for real.

* * *

It might be thought that to live closely to handicapped people requires an ability to live with suffering. This may be true, but is not the whole story by any means. Within the communities the blend of suffering and joy is formative, as it is in any life. Sometimes l'Arche seems like a kind of adult education! For some it lasts for a year or so, and they continue their lives, called to marriage and priestly and religious life, to specific careers and involvement in other parts of church or society. For some it becomes a way of life, although always with the freedom to move on. For all, however, it touches an area of their lives which is not easy.

Our people face us with our own suffering but also help us through it. Even if we can face our suffering, we may still have difficulties in receiving support in it! Those who live close to their own suffering do not just experience joy as an alternative, as a foil, nor merely as something that follows suffering after some long struggle, but as one and the same thing as suffering, coming from the one source, intimately bound together. That we find suffering difficult is true almost by definition. That we find resurrection difficult can come as a surprise. It is this quality of our handicapped people that we often find most difficult to face, and which shows us up to be the half-hearted Christians that we often are. This is their authority. In spite of their difficulties, emotional, psychological or spiritual, mentally handicapped people have something almost impossible to describe, which resonates with all of us, challenges us and threatens us, consoles us and brings us peace.

To live with them is to open a way to healing in ourselves, in the church and in the world. No longer is it possible to believe, with the Old Testament, that the rich will save the poor. It is the poor, the simple, who, with Jesus in the New Testament, will save us when we are rich, fulfilled and self-sufficient.

One day in my community a priest was talking with us around the dining table about heaven. He was not certain that everyone was listening or understood what he was trying to say. Suddenly he asked, 'Who wants to go to heaven anyway? — hands up those who want to go to heaven'. The handicapped people all shot their hands into the air eagerly, whilst the assistants looked furtively at one another, and cautiously, self-consciously, raised their hands. Sometimes it seems to me that the community life we live in l'Arche is a place to learn how to handle our freedom — that freedom of the children of God — and how to cope with heaven! There won't be any more suffering there, but the joy could be a problem for some of us! Our handicapped friends can express that joy more freely and easily than many of us, and in this way become our teachers in matters of the heart. This kind of authority can call us to greater authenticity.

In recent years a poster appeared at Christmas time to publicize the work of a national organisation for mentally handicapped people. A simple picture of a young face and the words, 'Twenty children born this Christmas will always have a cross to bear'. These words, perhaps unwittingly, are saying something quite accurate theologically! Christmas and the cross of Holy Week mark the two great feasts of the church's year, the two great feasts of the weakness of God: the child Jesus born in the stable and the man tormented and dying in total abandonment and vulnerability. The beginning and end of life, even God's life on earth, are enveloped in this poverty. For people born with a mental handicap much of this condition remains for their whole lives.

In a mysterious way, therefore, they live their lives in a more obvious and visible way than the rest of us, suspended between the two highlights of the liturgical year, Christmas and Easter, without the same sense of creativity and responsibility that mature adult life normally brings. To be mentally handicapped is to be called to live this grace, in one way or another, with all its difficulties, pain and fear of rejection, and to make it available to others, in society and especially in the church, where it can be fully understood and received.

Anthony Gibbings is the Regional Co-ordinator of L'Arche-Northern Europe.

A Question of Help on Your Doorstep

BY TESS NIND



HELP is one of those words used to describe a variety of activities which can be perceived very differently depending whether you are the giver or receiver, the subject or the object.

Asking for help is not always an easy matter. Parents demand help with washing up from their children, and justify it from their position of authority with 'It's good for them, they need to take some responsibility for their share of the housework'. The stall holder at the Church fete asks for gifts and help on behalf of a worthy cause, and justifies the request with 'It will be fun' and some reference to corporate responsibility or some service rendered to the prospective volunteer in the past or at some future date. Regular fete attenders do not need to actually hear the words. Asking publicly for help when we feel weak, vulnerable or a failure is a very different matter. We ask on behalf of others in church intercessions but seldom for ourselves. For many it is only a threat to our very survival that drives us to cry out.

Increasing numbers of very elderly people, the closure of long-stay hospitals and the discharge of the mentally and physically handicapped, mentally ill or very elderly infirm people back into the community, together with increasing unemployment and the poverty that goes with it, is the reality. This is matched by an increasing anxiety by some, and particularly those who will be expected to care, about the needs and problems of those who are poor and those who cannot care for themselves.

Families and friends, mainly women, provide the great bulk of care in the country. There are those, particularly the very elderly, who have few friends or family left, and some people whose needs are just so great that friends and family cannot care alone.

Caring may require the knowledge, skills and experience of the professional. Some tasks require strength and means which are not available to friends or family. Statutory Health and Social Services and Voluntary Organisations, with paid and unpaid staff or volunteers, are a vitally important strand in the fabric of society, if those who cannot survive alone are to continue to be valued and have opportunities to develop and grow as human beings despite their disabilities.

* * *

Who should care, can be as difficult a question as how to care. It is not easy to draw boundaries. Individuals, and the context in which they need help, vary a great deal. The tasks of caring may be the same; tending the frail at home may involve the family, in hospital, the nurse. The essential difference often lies as much in the nature of the relationship between those who are paid to care and those who are family, friends or perhaps volunteers, as in the task itself. Thus thinking about what help is needed requires us to think as much about the relationships that are wanted as about the actual task. Working out a package of care which takes both into account is likely to require consultation with family, professional staff, volunteers and the persons themselves. Sometimes there is a danger of one or other of the carers 'owning' the problem of the person in need, and making it impossible for the package to be worked out.

Whether weakness is the result of old age, recent disability, or a life time experience, it can mean that we are at the mercy of the powerful. These who have wealth and strength have power. As helpers or carers, we have our own needs which we meet when we help others. Meeting, these needs, whether we recognise them or not, can be the reason for continuing to help often in very difficult and costly ways. It may be that the relatively large numbers of women volunteers and paid carers in relation to men, has as much to do with our need as women to feel powerful, when we are weak at home or at work, as the widespread assumption that women, rather than men, are best fitted to care for others. Sometimes it seems easier to ask the paid worker for help where the nature of the power is clearer. After all, our taxes pay for this. In practice, however, it can be as difficult for the weak to make demands on a powerful medical profession or on the equally powerful structures of our health and social services, where accountability is not so much to the person in need as to a hierarchy of increasing power.

* * *

Giving help is a complex activity. It requires a sensitivity to others' needs, an awareness of our own needs and motives, and perhaps, above all, an ability to listen. It is vital to us all. While deceptively simple, it can be a challenge — it can destroy as much as it can create.

Getting involved in helping or caring can be a way of making friends and trying out new roles. It may be that we just cannot say no without feeling guilty about those less well off than ourselves. It may be that as a close relative, we have very little choice in providing care. Most of us will give and receive help at some time in our lives.

The simple word 'help' describes not only activities but a variety of relationships, some good and some bad. Relationships are a living web, without which neither the individual nor the wider society can survive. One response to this need for a network of relationships and the need to care for each other has been the development of Good Neighbour Schemes, Fish schemes, neighbourhood care groups. Churches have been behind if not in front of such schemes. With an independent base, they have an ability to bring people together from different organisations and with different skills and ideas. Often the purpose of such groups is to make the neighbourhood a better place for all to live in and to provide help for those in need. At their best they provide an opportunity for all sorts of people, including those who may be people normally seen as those in need of help, to find ways of getting involved in improving the neighbourhood and helping each other.

Sadly, all too often the original broad purpose of the scheme is lost and a small group of people see their success in terms of the number of people helped. Success in the numbers game can generate more demand, and everyone becomes so busy that there is no time to see whether the wider aims of improving the neighbourhood as a place to live in are being met. There is little awareness of the importance of relationships to those involved, and doing the task becomes an end in itself. Meeting the needs of individuals is for many of us the beginning of our involvement in the wider community, but help can be deficient and limiting, if it is confined to that.

The advantages of an organised scheme of help, whether it be through a Good Neighbour Scheme or a voluntary organisation with a wider brief than the neighbourhood, is that it can enable people to share the caring, to share the information and maybe to do something together to change or affect the situation which has created the problem for the individual or individuals. Prevention is better than cure, and it is easier to prevent a change of situation with the help of others than to try to do it alone. The trouble often is that preventing a situation may not meet our personal needs in the same way as providing help for an individual. We can only too easily justify our lack of involvement in corporate help by our busyness with individual help.

These personal reflections are not an answer to the question of how to care. There is no one answer. The questions are more fundamental. Why do I want to help? What does the person or people who have asked for help really want or need?

What about the relationship between the helper and the helped? Fortunately, people are still prepared to get involved.¹

Tess Nind is head of department in the London Voluntary Service Council.

¹Information about volunteering can be obtained from Volunteer Bureaux, which exist in many parts of the country. If the local telephone directory does not yield the information, then the Volunteer Centre, 29 Lower Kings Road, Berkhamstead, Herts., can provide the name of the nearest. Queries from readers in London can come to us at the London Voluntary Service Council, London Voluntary Work Development Centre, 68 Chalton Street, London, NW1 1JR.

What Can We Do To Help The World?

BY PAMELA H. GRUBER



THE IMAGES on the TV screen change from familiar commercials for the Listening Bank, Telecom and shampoo to the haunting pictures of men, women and children skeletal in form and barely able to walk. Thus another report begins on what is becoming known as the tragedy of Africa. No one knows for sure how many men, women and children are in danger of dying purely for lack of food over the next few months, but it does not really make any difference how many. It is absolutely clear, though, that huge numbers of people are in desperate need.

What can we do....?

We shift from my comfortable sitting room to my marginally less comfortable office. The telephone rings. It is a colleague to say he has just had a call from a farmer who saw last night's programme and is desperately upset. She is being fried for producing too much milk when clearly people are starving. Have we any suggestions to match up need and response ... Hang on, the other telephone is ringing.

What can we do...?

A colleague from another agency working in Kenya, is enraged. She has been asked to find 20 tonnes of milk powder a month for 9 months for 15,000 under-fives and 4,000 schoolchildren (the schools are closing because the children are too weak to walk there). Her agency cannot

afford to buy the milk powder but we all know there is a 'milk powder mountain' in Western Europe. Why do the European Community officials say there is none available before October and possibly not even then? Tell her of the farmer's reaction and also say I'll write to the Minister.

What can we do...?

Back to the other telephone: OK, I'll talk to the farmer.

Wouldn't it be marvellous to match up the need and the response? The farmer is very justifiably irate that she is being urged to cut down on milk production (having been urged last year to increase it) when she has seen the African newsreel pictures.

What can we do ...?

Now the conversation moves into the 'real' world of agricultural policies. As the discussion continues, I begin to feel: if this is the 'real' world, what is fantasy? Any policy which makes for excess food in places where people have too much to eat, and does not make it possible for this food, as and when appropriate, to be shared, lives life on a different planet from me. Added irony being that this surplus/non-shareable policy comes out of the same bureaucracy that prides itself on its aid programme to the Third World.

What can we do ...?

Christian Aid, the agency for which I work, is not primarily a relief agency. The vast proportion of its financial support goes to agricultural, health, training and other long-term projects. Nonetheless we have seen over recent years an alarming increase in the calls for immediate relief. Tragically the increase is because of 'man' made disasters rather than 'natural' ones. In Central America immediate relief is needed for the displaced people and refugees fleeing from the oppressive regime in El Salvador, immediate relief for the victims of civil war in Lebanon, immediate relief for the victims of the Eritrea/Tigray/Ethiopian war.

These are all clearly 'man' made disasters; but what of famine in Africa? Is that 'man' made or 'natural', or (as is sometimes said) an act of God? It is much easier to see an earthquake as a 'natural' disaster than famine and this famine in particular. Certainly some of the causes of the African famine are 'man' made: changes from traditional agricultural patterns to the production of cash crops for export (introduced in colonial times) which deplete the soil at an alarming rate. It is now acknowledged in some parts of Africa that rather than deserts encroaching on previously fertile land, it is the latter which is becoming

desert and moving to meet the traditional desert.

To add to this 'man' made desertification there is also the natural disaster of drought. Some regions in Africa have not had proper rains for four years with a resulting drop in food production, thus exacerbating the situation.

So what *can* we do to help? There are four things we can do which are closely interwoven although they are listed separately.

Pray, learn, act, give.

Pray:

Over and over again Christians on the front line in the struggle for survival emphasise to Christian Aid how much it means to them that they are supported and upheld by continuing prayer. It is a humbling and moving privilege to receive letters from partners re-inforcing this. Last Christmas I received a card from Father de la Torre, brought by a colleague who had visited him in his Filipino detention camp. Christian Aid had once more asked him to speak at a Conference but he had not been released in time to do it. He said:

'... It seems I'll have to wait for a Third National Conference before managing to make up for my two non-shows! And thank you very much for the concern and appreciation that the invitations represent. When I get out of here I'll surely try my best to make it up to you.

'... Always we hope and gain strength from knowing there are friends who care'.

Father Ed's gracious joy and thanks in prayerful support is repeated many times in our incoming mail.

It is not just in private prayer that those under great stress need to be lifted up to God but also in our formal worship — in the liturgy and most particularly at the eucharist. It is not enough to pray 'God feed the hungry; God liberate the oppressed', without actually becoming a co-worker with God. And to become a co-worker with God we need to learn.

Learn:

Recently an all-party committee on development was launched in the Palace of Westminster including members of both Houses of Parliament. The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth gave the address in his usual eloquent, moving and witty way. He told us that at one of the early sessions of the Brandt Commission, one of his fellow commissioners talked of MEGO issues. Now, like all well-informed

developmentalists, Shridath Ramphal had heard of MEGA and MICRO issues but what on earth could MEGO issues be? He bided his time, not wishing to appear ignorant by asking, and gradually built up a picture of MEGO issues: the Lome Convention, Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), re-scheduling of debts, the International Monetary Fund, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). All these appeared to be MEGO issues. Finally the other Commissioner revealed what MEGO stood for: these were all issues, he said, that 'when I hear them discussed, My Eyes Glaze Over'.

The spontaneous roar of laughter and applause that went round the room at the telling of this tale indicated that for many of us these were temptingly MEGO issues too! But we cannot afford to be ignorant of these issues — all in their own way contribute to or help to alleviate the suffering of hundreds of millions of people. Of course we do not all have to become development specialists, but we do at least need to know where or to whom we can go to learn the background to them. Without this background, whether it be on the Lome Convention or the reasons why Father Ed, in fulfilling his priesthood, is seen as a threat to state security in the Philippines, it is difficult to act constructively.

We can learn by reading regularly Christian Aid News (which can also inform our prayer life). By joining the World Development Movement and/or starting up a local group. Many MEGO issues are simplified for us in WDM briefing papers. Two recent reports from the Independent Group on British Aid (IGBA) entitled *Real Aid* and *Aid is Not Enough* enable the non-specialist to grasp some of the more complex arguments relating to the UK Government aid programme. But learning in itself is not enough.

Act:

In every community and parish at least one person needs to be designated as the contact/resource person on Third World issues. He/she will receive publications about development, will know the particular people/places that need special prayer, will hear of new audio-visuals to use to learn more. This person needs to be a communicator who shares, rather than a squirrel who becomes a repository, so that the community/parish can act as individuals or a group.

One World Week (October each year) is an excellent programme for learning/acting in an enjoyable way. The Third World should not be seen as unmitigated despair — the stories, the theology, food, the prayer life, the joy are something in which we can share and from which we can

learn. Christian Aid Week (May) should be another focus for action.

Perhaps more difficult for many Christians is the action that is often labelled political: writing letters to MPs and MEPs and taking part in Parliamentary lobbies. Yet we delude ourselves if we think that our Christian commitment does not entail taking our civic duties seriously. The policies which affect development in the Third World are too important to be left to politicians and civil servants. The Alice in Wonderland situation which is sketched out above in relation to food surpluses/deficiencies arises because the present Common Agricultural Policy is based on food surpluses. This will not change unless enough ordinary people communicate their disgust at the overfed producing yet more food whilst the underfed starve to death. (A word of warning, though:— the Third World should not be used as a dumping ground for our surpluses. Food aid is needed in time of disaster, but the real solutions are food production policies in the Third World which can be implemented there). Another issue for learning and action is the question of whether there is a correlation between the vast spending on the arms race and the lack of resources available to overcome underdevelopment.

Give:

Earlier mention was made of the humbling and moving privilege of receiving letters from overseas partners under duress. Equally humbling and moving is the sacrificial response which is received from people responding both to special appeals and the ongoing work of Christian Aid; people of all ages and of all financial states who want to share with those in need. But it is not money alone — vital though it is — that is needed. It is the gifts of time and talents which are also vital: given to organising and collecting in Christian Aid Week; given to helping others learn about the reasons for the needs that flit across our TV screens and newspaper pages; given in our prayer and worship life.

The gap between rich and poor is immense and growing. It would be easy to give way to despair — easy but un-Christian. Faith, hope and love are the central characteristics of our belief. It is these that undergird our lives and enable us to find the answer to the question: what can we do to help?

Pamela H. Gruber is Adviser to the Board of Christian Aid on Ecumenical Relations.

Life is a pure flame and we live by an invisible sun within us.

Sir Thomas Browne (1605-1682)

Ways of Helping Politically

BY FRANK FIELD, M.P.



MY BRIEF is to consider the political ways we can help improve the lot of our fellow men or, as we are more likely to say as Christians, the means by which with God's Grace, we can help establish the Kingdom.

One major way in which we can make our opinions felt is by trying to promote a Christian perspective on life. But here we face an immediate difficulty. Put quite simply, the populus could be forgiven in thinking that Christianity didn't exist in this country. It is true that our spokesmen, usually the Bishops and sometimes Synod, make the odd contribution to national debates, but more often than not their contributions appear absurd with the protagonists getting themselves hung up on sexual questions. One glorious exception to this appalling trend is the Bishop of Salisbury's report on nuclear weapons. I don't happen to agree with the report, but it is a first-class contribution in two important respects. It begins with a theological perspective and so asserts our right and duty to join in the political debate. It also makes a technical contribution to the debate which cannot be faulted by the experts.

The fundamental weakness of the Anglican Church — and others too — is that we have no agreement on what the role of the Church in the world should be. To polarise an argument is to distort it, but generally speaking we seem to be divided between those whose almost total preoccupation appears to envelop themselves in personal piety, while others tear around professing a Marxist Christian stand — whatever that means. What we lack is what Charles Gore drew attention to in his Halley Stewart Lectures almost sixty years ago, namely, a widespread agreement on what constitutes the general principles of the Christian message. How these principles are then applied to a political issue is a matter of debate, and will no doubt find Christians using them to make different political contributions. Trying to respond to what Gore highlighted as a fundamental weakness would be a suitable starting point for an Archbishop's Commission.

The failure to have an agreement on the established principles of the Christian message as it applies to the world leads to a further weakness. Because of this vacuum most Christians lack the confidence to make a distinct Christian contribution to public debate. And this weakness is self-enforcing. Because there are so few distinctly Christian contributions to current affairs, those who do contribute are made to

feel as though they are at best a trifle odd or, at worst, simply deranged. Not surprisingly, therefore, many Christians take to the closet.

On this score, therefore — acting as a Christian community attempting with God's grace to help further the Kingdom — Christians appear to have little effect. How we break out of this ghetto is something to which we ought to give much greater thought.

This brings me to Synod, for this is an issue which it should address. While I have attended Synod debates in the past, I have only been a co-opted member for the last two meetings. Yet three impressions are lodged in my mind. The first is that party politics are as strong in Synod as they are in the House of Commons; indeed, in some respects the position is worse. The Catholic and Evangelical parties are organised on a caucus basis — with the Catholics applying greater effort. Both wings cloak their party divisions in high sounding religious verbiage. Experiencing the bitter hatred one group has of the other I now understand for the first time why it was not so many centuries ago that Christians used to advocate burning one another for their heretical views.

Another major weakness of Synod is its method of business. The dominant approach is that the very clever people of Synod are thought to be those politicians who can 'fix' in the same way that clever politicians at Westminster are supposed to behave. But this fixing and manoeuvring often amounts to little more than practising the politics of deceit. Let me give two examples. The opponents of the Prayer Book knew that they had little to no chance of officially replacing the Book. Yet anyone reading the debates leading up to the Alternative Services Book will notice how often the emphasis was put on the wish for mere experimentation. Yet once the experiments were underway the argument swiftly changed, and Synod and Parliament were told of the chaos which would ensue if the reforms were not given a permanent basis. Once this had been conceded, the move was on by all too many Bishops and clergy to push, bully and cajole their parishes into the new mode of worship. The new form of service may well be in the best interests of the Church — although I doubt it. What is so wrong was that the reform was brought about in a dishonourable manner, and has been implemented in an even worse way. Winning reforms in this way shows a failure to understand how the Kingdom is established. It is not just a matter of winning this or that reform. Much more important is the way we act in attempting to bring about structural change, for the Kingdom itself consists of a fundamental change in the way we think and act.

The other example centres on the ordination of women — a move which I happen to favour. Synod is bitterly divided on this issue to a degree which I think is greater than the Church at large. Knowing the difficulties of getting legislation through empowering the ordination of women in this country, the Legislative Committee (the nearest Synod has to a Cabinet) has hit on the wheeze of allowing women ordained abroad to officiate in this country on a temporary basis. If this is agreed I am sure the next move will be to argue for this concession to be made permanent (one can already hear the argument: 'why not, as they are already officiating') and then the case for ordaining women here will be within the grasp of the reformers. Synod will have won another battle against the Church, but in so doing it will leave in its train a whole series of wreckage and even greater distrust.

Anglicans wishing their Church to play a more effective role in establishing the Kingdom ought now to seriously look at the functioning of Synod. I believe it is in need of a major overhaul. We need to strengthen the cardinal principle of the way our Church has operated whereby Bishops have delegated their authority to curates. The links and bonds between the Bishop and his clergy need to be increased and the role and functioning of Synod must take second place.

We also need to think how we can operate through church societies as well as secular pressure groups. Christians were behind establishing many of today's most prominent social interest groups — Shelter and Child Poverty Action Group are two examples. While Christians have a duty to operate through a whole range of secular groups, this support ought not to be at the expense of our own church-based groups. Take one example. The group, Church Action on Poverty, seeks to campaign largely within the Church. Its aim is to increase awareness among Christians about the causes and extent of poverty in our society. It also seeks to influence the Church's own actions so that it not only speaks out for the poor, but favours them wherever possible.

There is a great deal individual Christians can do both in reforming Synod and working within pressure groups. Whether we are Evangelicals or Catholics we ought to attempt to select Synod members who are less partisan and bitter than are some current members. The structure of Synod also needs to be reformed but this will only happen if members through their PCCs begin thinking about what kind of government is suitable for a church and making sure their views are known to their local Synod members, their Deanery Synod, their Bishop as well as to the media. Similarly, the lack of an agreed and publicly

espoused role for the Church in the world shouldn't be used as a cop out for no action at all in trying to make the world a more perfect place in which to live. There still exists a fairly widespread agreement on what most of us regard as right and wrong, and what is fair or unfair. This basic sense of justice is implanted in us by God and has in this country been nurtured over the centuries by the Church's social teaching — feeble as this has been at times. This innate sense of justice should be harvested to the full.

There is also one other way in which Christians can and must be involved politically, and that is in prayer. One has only to listen to the offertory prayers on a Sunday morning to realise that almost no thinking or praying goes into this aspect of our collective responsibility. For years a mention of the unemployed has been the sum total of our prayers for the poor, while world poverty gains even less consideration. And that usually is the sum total of our collective involvement.

While this aspect of campaigning has been left to the end it is by far the most important. At each point of the gospel — when Jesus talks about 'the way' Christians should live — his story invariably illustrates how impossible 'the way' is for men acting alone, but that with God all things are possible. The building of the Kingdom — which is our main task, both as individuals and as a Christian community — is impossible by ourselves, but perfectability of the world through Christ is a totally different matter.

Frank Field is the Member of Parliament for Birkenhead and a member of the General Synod of the Church of England.

Give us the grace your truth to see
In nations' power futility.
Shall we a million deaths intend
And claim that we Christ's truth defend?

For this our sin the Lord once died.
Man's trust in power God crucified.
Shall we bring twice to Calvary
This Lord of our Humanity?

O Spirit, may this sin be healed,
In weakness is your power revealed.
No power have we ourselves alone
Yet in Christ's body we are strong.

from Christian CND hymns

Books Guidance

The Spiritual Life By Evelyn Underhill 128 pp. Mowbray, 1984

(a reprint edition — published in 1937 by Hodder and Stoughton) £1.75

Spiritual Direction By Martin Thornton, x + 145 pp., SPCK, 1984, £5.95

Here are four broadcast talks from a great teacher and prophet of twentieth century Anglicanism. They were given nearly fifty years ago, and so (although her gist is timeless) her direct appeal can only be to those of the senior generation. For them, the beauty of her prose style makes her words a worthy vehicle for the essentially simple nature of the truth she seeks to impart.

Canon Thornton's book is a welcome corrective to the strongly Ignatian character of so much that is published today —

in his rather cheery, sometimes abrasive (to some, irritating) manner he reminds us that while each has a unique journey to a unique spiritual destiny, the work of the guide and helper must be informed by a wide knowledge of the Bible, the fathers, the schools of prayer — as well as of himself and of his client. He does not leave us with the impression that direction can happen by accident, and makes a strong plea for a right professionalism. All concerned need this book.

ANSELM S.S.F.

Instruction

Journey into Faith By Peter Ball

SPCK 1984, £1.95

This book is about preparing adults for baptism and confirmation. It seeks to involve the church in this task through the full use of lay men and women. The church is seen as welcoming and accompanying catechumens from unbelief, or little belief, to faith in Jesus Christ and to initiation into full membership of his church. The author uses the model of the catechumenate as developed by the Roman Catholic Church in France.

The book is thorough in its treatment of the methods used, the content of the teaching, and the training and support of lay leaders. It emphasizes the need for the church to be a friendly and welcoming community. To quote the author, 'One of the main marks of the catechumenal approach has been, quite simply, friendship.'

It is a valuable little book (52pp) which would repay serious study by any parish priest, as well as those lay people concerned with helping the increasing number of people coming to Christian faith as adults.

The ecumenical dimension is also seen as important, and the practical consequences of our common baptism are looked at. There is a foreword by the Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops in charge of the West London area.

However, I see some problems. Firstly, the author writes very much from his own experience telling the story of his parish. This is a strength for we receive the experience of this community. But, the weakness is that what works in Peter Ball's 'small suburban town' may not work elsewhere, and especially not in the inner-city or the country village. This seems obvious but it needs re-asserting in these days of easy optimism that the right method will work. Church growth enthusiasm, for example, frequently ignores the local sociological and psychological factors and too easily asserts, 'It can happen here.' Allied to this is the reality that a parish may only have one inquirer a year — not exactly a group. Yet the catechumenate demands a group. Also,

many parishes find it hard to get lay involvement. The catechumenate, as outlined in this book, depends on lay leadership. This can be hard to find.

But, it is a good book and will stimulate

serious thought, and hopefully action, about the journey into faith.

TONY JOHNSON

Vicar of All Saints, Scunthorpe

Wells of Salvation

Christian England. Volume 2. From the Reformation to the 18th Century

By David L. Edwards. Collins Fount Paperbacks (pp.509 + Index). U.K. £4.95

In Volume I of *Christian England - its story to the Reformation* - David Edwards, now Provost of Southwark Cathedral, wrote: 'I believe that it matters that we should appreciate the impact which the Christian religion has made on the lives and imaginations of the English people.' And in Volume 2 he added: 'I have attempted to write the first ecumenical history of English Christianity ... we shall not be entirely occupied by the disputes. We shall attempt to look beneath the divisions and to glimpse the unity of a religion as it wells up into the lives of English Christians ... we shall accompany them on the journeys of Christian discipleship; on old pilgrimages made new by personal conviction, suffering and delight.'

The suffering for personal conviction was, of course, appalling, and the courage magnificent. One of the Elizabethan martyrs, Robert Colton, a simple boy from Wisbech, said at his trial before the Archbishop of Canterbury in Lambeth Palace: 'I hear say that England hath been a Catholic Christian country a thousand years afore this queen's reign and her father's. If that were the old highway to heaven, then why should I forsake it? I have no goods to leave. I pray you give me leave to save my soul.' And a century later a Dissenting minister, Thomas Browning,

sent this message of consolation from Northampton gaol to his people: 'Come, the worst is death, and that is the best of all.'

But the delight of personal conviction was also glorious. I have found most fascinating the chapters on the religion of Elizabeth the First, William Shakespeare, John Donne, George Herbert, James the Second and the Non-jurors. The course of events is vividly illustrated by impressions and incidents from the lives of many participants from Stephen Gardiner to Oliver Cromwell, and from John Bunyan to Richard Challoner.

There are copious references for further reading on nearly every page.

The two volumes of *Christian England* are noble books, and the third, and final volume, which I have not yet read, has now been published.

Today in Christian England we no longer live under threat of axe or fire, nor in expectation of the necessity of exile. We enjoy complete freedom for worship and witness, and we make our 'pilgrimage of personal conviction, suffering and delight' with our contemporaries Dr. Ian Paisley M.P., Monsignor Bruce Kent and the Bishop of Durham.

DENIS S.S.F.

The world is a great volume and man is the index of that Booke.

John Donne (1573-1631)

BOOKS

Books Received

45

The Reviews Editor gratefully acknowledges receipt of the following publications: *Christian England*, by *D.L. Edwards*, Collins (Fontana Paperbacks); *Words of Life*, by *Frances Hogan*, Collins (Fontana Paperbacks); *The Cross against the Bomb*, by *Robin Gill*, SCM Press; *A Certain Sound*, by *Cedric Mayson*, SCM Press; *New Life (Prison Chaplaincy Review)*, Editor *Rev A.R. Duce*; *The Spiritual Life*, by *Evelyn Underhill*, Mowbray & Co.; *Spiritual Direction*, by *Martin Thornton*, SPCK; *The Flame of Divine Love*, by *Jean-Pierre de Caussade*, DLT: '.. Man must not divide' A Consideration of Theological Problems raised by the Remarriage Proposals. Report of a Conference attended by Bp John Austin Baker and others at Oxford, May 1984. *Priestland Right and Wrong*, by *Gerald Priestland*, Fontana Paperbacks; *Midwinter Spring*, by *Susan Coupland*, DLT; *Biblical Faith*, by *Gerd Theissen*, SCM Press; *Exploration in Health and Salvation*, by *Bob Lambourne*, University of Birmingham; *Bringing Forth Christ*, by *Saint Bonaventure*, Trans. *Eric Doyle OFM*, SLG Press; *The Case Against God*, by *Gerald Priestland*, Collins; *Partners, A Bulletin of Mission & Evangelism in Britain Today*, Partners (Dorchester); *The First Christmas*, by *Rachel Billington*, Collins Fount Paperbacks; *Poverty Network*, Church Action on Poverty; *Defender of the Church of England (The Life of Bishop R. R. Williams)*, by *John Peart-Binns*, The Amate Press, Oxford; *The Captains and the Kings Depart*, by *Jack Bazalgette*, The Amate Press, Oxford.

Ash Wednesday

As sign of sorrow, I am smudged
with a grey smut of sin,
all my intended goodness
gone like smoke
and these are ashes of days
laid waste by me.
The priest's finger dirties my brow
with an annual reproof.

When the Miserere lifts
above the rise of arches,
the song strikes against the stone.

I can imagine outside
the moon rising, and beyond
successions of innumerable stars.
"So far hath He set our offences from us" —
immensity cannot measure
the infinite mercy of God.

SUSAN FISHER

A Kiswahili poem with its English translation

BY BROTHER OTTO, N/SSF

UTAWA VENDELEE

1. Utawa ulianza, hapa kwetu Afirika,
Ulifika Italia, mizizi ukasimika,
Ndipo palipotokea, mlolongo mashirika,
Utawa uendelee, tuitangaze Injili.
2. Mchango uliotoa, kwa Kanisa wajulika,
Mabaya uliondoa, Kanisa likasafika,
Motowe haujapoa, waendelea kuwaka,
Utawa uendelee, tuitangaze Injili.
3. Karine za katikati, alizaliwa Assisi,
Kijana mtanashati, alipokuwa mwasisi,
Kiongozi madhubuti, wa ndugu bila ukwasi,
Utawa uendelee, tuitangaze Injili.
4. Moto aliuchochea, Kijana Furansisi,
Mfano kufuatia, walijiunga upesi,
Yeye aliwavutia, wakawa ni wafuasi,
Utawa uendelee, tuitangaze Injili.
5. Mashirika yalifika, hapa kwetu Tanzania,
Ya ki-Furansisika, hapa yamejitana,
Mwito uno usikika, vijana tumepania,
Utawa uendelee, tuitangaze Injili.
6. Daima hatutasita, Mtoni tunayo nia,
Na hata kule Kasita, kwa dhati wamenuia,
Nyayo tutazifuata, Bwana Kumpigania,
Utawa uendelee, tuitangaze Injili.

MAY THE RELIGIOUS LIFE PROGRESS

1. The Religious life, began here in Africa.
It reached Italy, where the roots were strengthened,
And after that a succession, of communities arose.
May it progress, that the Gospel be known.
2. The contribution it made to the Church is known.
Bad elements it removed, and the Church was cleansed.
The fire it lit, still continues to burn.
May it progress, that the Gospel be known.
3. In the middle ages, was born in Assisi
An inspiring young man, who became founder
And reliable leader of brothers, who lived without wealth.
May it progress, that the Gospel be known.
4. The example of this, young man Francis,
Spread like a fire and many joined him.
He drew them and they became his followers.
May it progress, that the Gospel be known.
5. They arrive here in Tanzania,
Those groups of Franciscans, and spread everywhere.
The call has been heard, and we youths have responded.
May it progress, that the Gospel be known.
6. We will not flinch at all, at Mtoni we are firm,
And even at Kasita, they are firmly resolved.
We shall follow the Lord's footsteps, and fight for Him.
May it progress, that the Gospel be known.

MAY '84

Eucharist

At San Damiano the eucharist was
placed in a monstrance
fringed with golden rays.

At San Girolamo, we received the eucharist
from a pottery bowl, and became
ourselves the frail lanterns
through which the light must show.

SUSAN FISHER.

The Pond

Having so many postcards of crucifixions
and having the same image hanging
in silver round my neck,
I felt like Judas
I had missed the point.

I needed an unfamiliar picture
of what God's love is like,
so I sat before Him in silence,
and He gave me the image of a pond,
ripples spreading calmly
from an invisible centre.
I watched carefully.
The ripples kept on widening,
nothing hindered their slow growth,
and the pond was endless.

I remembered then
how the universe itself
with all its uncoiling spirals of galaxies
is expanding infinitely

and I saw anew that love
so boundless
it allowed the Son to die

before whose generosity
the heavy stone sealing the tomb
simply rolled itself away.

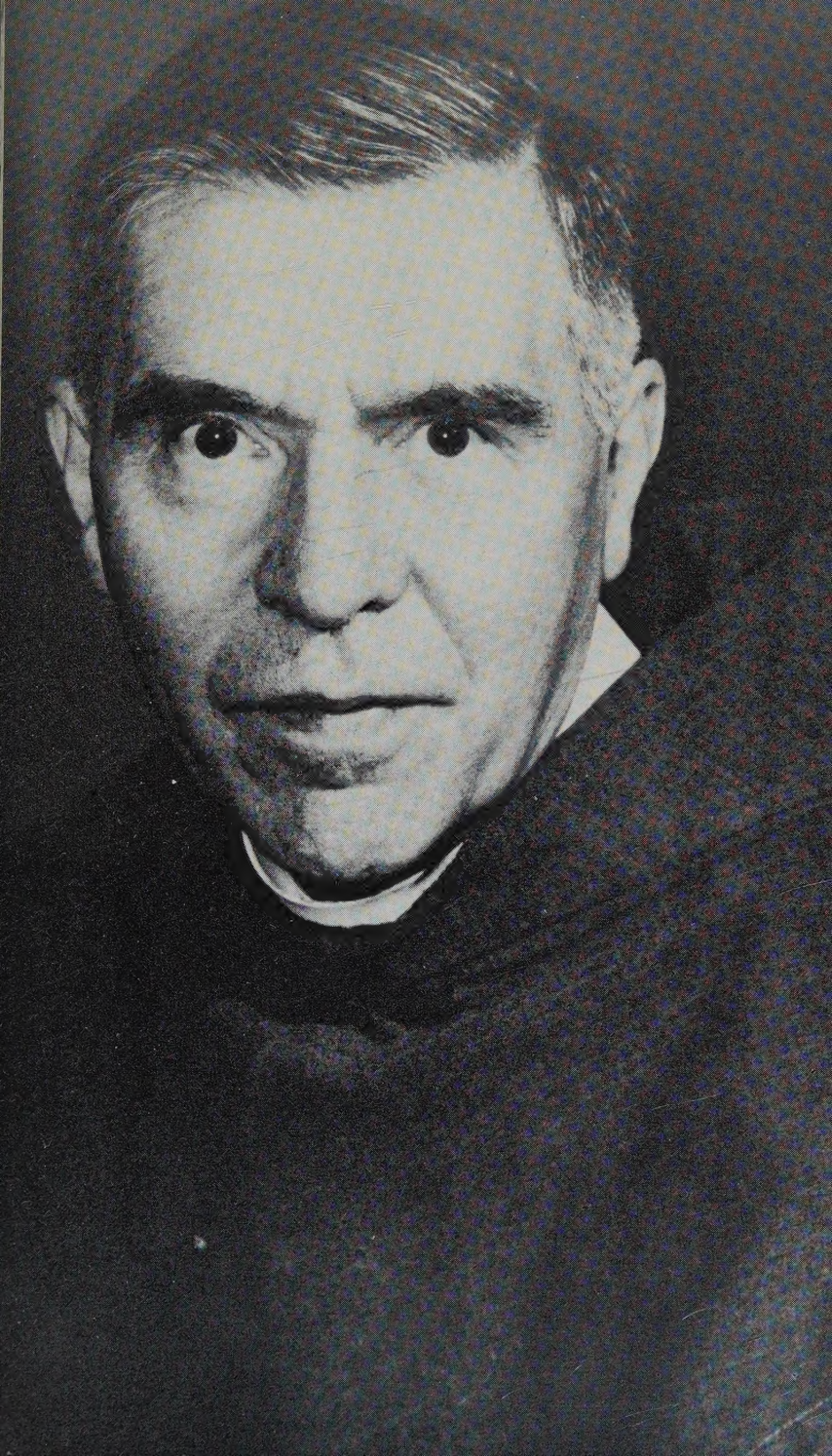
SUSAN FISHER.

The Gates of Vision

On a cold day
When snow littered the roofs and diamonds the grass,
Glory shone as through wide-flung gates,
Warm, serene, welcoming.
Perhaps it was the wren's bright song
Unlocked the dark doors and drew us in.

Never let winter
Deny the ever-invading warmth of summer.
Nor the bitter wind
That heralds the late swallows
Clang shut the gates of vision.

THELMA FROST.



BROTHER STEPHEN